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48



16



52

FEATURES

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN | 42 |
| Our hands-on, gloves-off guide to selecting the ideal deck. By Lawrence B. Johnson | |
| VIDEO'S BEST KEPT SECRET | 48 |
| For hard-to-find tapes and discs, mail-order video is just a quick phone call away. By M. Faust | |
| BREAKING THE COLOR BARRIER | 52 |
| Why true color accuracy is home video's biggest bugaboo, and what you can do to fix it. By Daniel Kumin | |
| EXTRA LONG TAPES—THE REAL SKINNY | 56 |
| New materials launch a space race that's already led to 10-hour tapes. By Roderick Woodcock | |

TAPES & DISCS

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| REVIEWS | 64 |
| Mississippi Masala, The Double Life of Veronique, more | |
| EDITOR'S CHOICE / Julie Brown's Medusa. By Kenneth Korman | 65 |
| DIRECTORY / The latest releases on tape and disc | 69 |

VIDEOTESTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| FISHER FVH-8902 VHS VCR, | 16 |
| Mitsubishi HS-C35 S-VHS-C camcorder, | |
| Pioneer CLD-D701 laserdisc player, | |
| Canon E210 8mm camcorder. | |
| By Berger-Braithwaite Labs | |

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|---|------------|
| CHANNEL ONE / Video values—and choice | 6 |
| FEEDBACK / Letters from readers | 11 |
| GAZETTE / VSDA, Japanese laserdiscs, more | 14 |
| NEW PRODUCTS / New compact camcorders from JVC and Hitachi, more | 33 |
| HANDS-ON TEST / Thiel SCS 2.2 speakers | 38 |
| OFF THE AIR / Driven crazy by video? You're not alone | 114 |

Cover:

A user's guide to top VHS VCRs. Pictured are models from Sony, RCA, Mitsubishi and Toshiba. Photo by Jay Brenner.

Video Magazine
Volume XVI
Number 7



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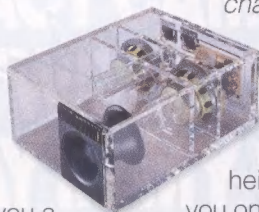
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HOW TO BUY SUBWOOFERS

Subwoofers resonate the finest low ends sounds, enabling the home theater to provide the seat-rumbling sound effects that you feel at the movies in your own living room. With all the models currently on the market, what should a videophile look for in these necessary audio components?

Charles Back, executive vice president of Miller & Kreisel Sound, says that, for consumers, the first priority is on size. "Many subwoofers feature push/pull drivers, which have one driver mounted conventionally and the other facing inside the cabinet. The drivers are electronically out of phase, meaning that they work in phase to produce bass in the room and work out of phase electrically to remove even-order harmonic distortion. This technology makes for smaller

cabinet designs with greater efficiency."

As an example, Back mentions the dual 8-inch

MX70, a self-powered model that features a 125-watt amplifier. "It is very popular," Back explains, "because it is very compact, yet provides bass comparable with that of a 12-inch model."

When shopping for a subwoofer, Back recommends listening to a variety of sources. "Some models can produce room shaking effects, but when music is played, you find the speaker has poor transient abilities. A good test of these abilities is the sound of a string bass being plucked."

As for power output, Back warns "a power rating in itself does not tell you how loud it will play. The speaker's efficiency should also be taken into consideration. Necessary power output is something best discussed with the dealer."

PARA is an association of specialty audio/video retailers. To locate a PARA dealer near you, call:

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CHANNEL ONE

Video values—and choice

Has anyone else had enough of the seemingly endless election year flapdoodle about "family values" (whatever they are), and how they should play a key role in deciding who should be our country's chief executive? The notion that 250 million people should agree on anything—much less the infinite variations surrounding the most intimate decisions of our personal lives—is absurd, despite what some vying for high office maintain.

But the topic was evident this season in the video world, too—at the annual convention of the Video Software Dealers Association (VSDA) and between the lines of our second annual "Drives Me Crazy" poll. As the national elections were gearing up, we tallied your votes and were struck by parallels between your video-related gripes and the deep-seated unrest among the electorate in the political arena. You'll find the results of the poll in this month's "Off the Air" column (page 114).

At VSDA, Disney studio chief Jeffrey Katzenberg, noting the verbal barbs aimed at Hollywood's creative community in recent months, scored his industry for not "setting its sights higher." Likewise, Paramount head Brandon Tartikoff observed that if a movie "has no redeeming quality" other than making a lot of money, "You have to look at what's left of your soul and say, 'Do I want to be part of this?'" Tartikoff also said he hoped his company's future releases would "have more support from the heartland of America."

Meanwhile the thousands of reader gripes we received from the heartland and all other parts of the U.S. of A. weren't concerned with abstract family values as much as they were with freedom.

You told us you want to be free to buy one cable channel at a time without others you don't watch. You want to be free to watch movies that haven't been censored by someone who may not like part of it. You want to be free to use all the features you paid for on your TV set without being limited by your cable company.

More than anything else, the survey demonstrates the diversity of video readers and the sense of freedom home video represents for you—especially your desire to be left alone to enjoy your particular brand of home entertainment without the imposition of someone else's "values." For the past 15 years, home video has provided that freedom. Now, with 50,000 titles on tape and disc, plus technology that lets ordinary people create their own homemade videos, all people ought to be able to find the movies and programs that are right for them, according to their own values.

James M. Barry
Editor

Cal Lewis



**BEFORE YOU BUY A
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Panasonic introduces the new Palmcorder™ Camcorder. Yes, it's VHS. So its tapes will play in any VHS recorder. Yours, your family's and your friends'.

Before you buy a compact camcorder, make sure its tapes will play in the VHS recorder you already own. **Otherwise you'll have to connect your camcorder to your TV every time you watch a tape. And that's not just inconvenient, it means your camcorder will get twice the wear.**

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HAPPY MONDAYS YES PLEASE:Stinkin' Thinkin' Elektra

1990's PILLS 'N' THRILLS AND BELLYACHES and the hit single "Step On," drove HAPPY MONDAYS from ecstasy-stained club attraction to mega-watt novos of Britain's dance-rock explosion. Produced by Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth, "Yes, Please," takes them the important next step. Prepare to move both mind and feet with HAPPY MONDAYS' new single, "Stinkin' Thinkin'."



Ice-T (lead vocals), Ernie C. (lead and acoustic guitars), Mooseman (bass), D-Roc (rhythm guitars) and Beatmaster "V" (drums) are the revolutionary metal band Body Count. At 1991's show-stopping Lollapalooza appearances, on their debut album, and on their around-the-world 1992 tour, Body Count's words and music are as tough as they are smart.



BODY COUNT BODY COUNT:The Winner Loses Sire/Warner Bros

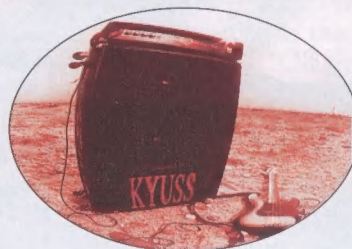


TORI AMOS LITTLE EARTHQUAKES:Crucify Atlantic

Juxtaposing images of Charles Manson and ice cream, purring winsomely about crucifixion and violation. Through Tori Amos the rumblings of a soul are exposed. Her poetry persists, naked in its frank attempts to reconcile, or at least recognize, the disparities that surround her. Her music is unnerving, disconcerting, yet absolutely compelling.

KYUSS BLUES FOR THE RED SUN:Green Machine Dali Records

Take 70's acid rock, add a super heavy bass and guitar sound and the result is - KYUSS - four young musicians from Palm Desert, Cal. who describe their sound as 'A fresh bong load of potent, sticky and hairy musical salvation.' "Green Machine" is the first single/video resonating from "BLUES FOR THE RED SUN."



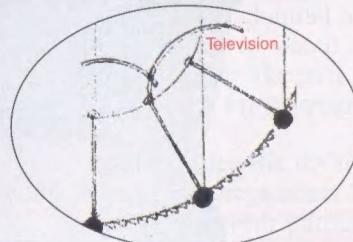
Aztec Camera return to the spotlight with "Spanish Horses," the first release of their fifth Sire album. Singer/songwriter/guitarist Roddy Frame has been crafting soulful, smart pop songs for over ten years, and once again he demonstrates his talents with a beautiful collection of tunes.



AZTEC CAMERA SPANISH HORSES Sire/Reprise

TELEVISION TELEVISION:Call Mr. Lee Capitol

Tom Verlaine's unique and deep vocals set the tone for the timeless, innovative material on TELEVISION's self-titled new release including the new single "Call Mr. Lee". This highly anticipated album features the wild and distinctive guitar sound that was the trademark of their earlier recordings. TELEVISION is: Tom Verlaine, Richard Lloyd, Fred Smith and Billy Ficca.



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you inside out.

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Currently on tour, THE BEAUTIFUL's compelling combination of rock, alternative, and punk is expansive music, is the psychic purge of musically possessed and obsessed minds. Their album Storybook pulls you into a musical otherworld, revealing what can be when a band pursues the infinite goal of apocalyptically good sound.



THE BEAUTIFUL
STORYBOOK: John Doe
Giant

SONIC YOUTH
DIRTY: 100%
DGC



Gloriously unrefined, strikingly original, unafraid of controversy, SONIC YOUTH are widely acclaimed as the incontestable leaders of underground rock. Arresting both visually and musically, the "100%" video comes from their new album, DIRTY, a staggering sonic chronicle of life in and under America in the nineties.



"Power groove" is how PANTERA describes their sound "it's a heavy, riff-oriented feel." With non-sugar-coated lyrics which slice straight to the bone on matters of racism and close-minded self-righteousness, Pantera's angry voice supplies heavy, driving serious music to people who rely on it.

PANTERA
VULGAR DISPLAY OF POWER: This Love
Atco



Chicago's own MATERIAL ISSUE bring you the edgy pop tune "What Girls Want" from their second Mercury album DESTINATION UNIVERSE. Hot on the tracks of their first album "International Pop Overthrow," MATERIAL ISSUE is back with their signature three part harmony built around brilliant guitar work and complete with multiple pop hooks.

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FEEDBACK

Culture commandos

I've been reading *Video Magazine* for years, but it wasn't until I read Kenneth Korman's "Editor's Choice" column in the August issue that something clicked. Just think, *Video Magazine* finally got up the courage to mention "high culture." And how well it must know its readers when it asks them if opera "ranks somewhere between root canal and paying taxes," since Korman "has no taste for it." How Mozart must be rejoicing somewhere up above now that his works have finally been brought down to earth. And if Peter Sellars says *Figaro* is "transcendently overplotted," who would dispute someone who is so momentarily hot? What's finally clear is why *Video Magazine* shuns one whole area of video experience. Who would want high culture—even in a sealed section to accommodate those with "no taste for it."

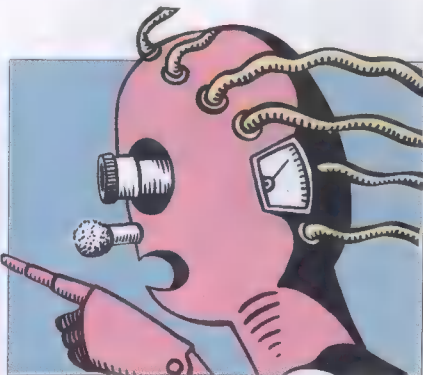
Don Sigal
Chicago, Illinois

A slight alteration of Kenneth Korman's text on Peter Sellars' Mozart tapes would more accurately assess these productions. Korman states that the productions were conceived "in the hopes of reaching those of us with no taste for the form." I suggest the line should read "in the hopes of reaching those of us with no taste." Thankfully, Mozart's music transcends even Sellars' loathsome assault.

Wayne Hardy
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Man vs. machine

I couldn't agree more with Brent Butterworth's comments on the objective vs. subjective debate ("Off the Air," Aug. '92). A wine can be tested chemically hundreds of times with very great precision, yet no matter what those tests say, we would sooner trust the judgment of a wine connoisseur over any test results when it comes time to buy a fine wine. Scientists sometimes have a hard time understanding that in some areas—such as sight, sound and taste—a human being who has trained his or her senses



over the years can discern differences that continue to elude the best electronic equipment.

Benjamin Emmerich
San Rafael, California

Regarding "Man vs. machine: the great testing debate," I strongly suspect that when an electronic device travels through the assembly line and goes through a packing and shipping procedure, the published specs are more often than not knocked askew.

Roland Voges
Houston, Texas

Buyer beware

Video Magazine does its best to advise the mail-order customer with its mail-order guidelines, but some of us just won't heed the warning. When ordering, ask a company about its return policy. I found out the hard way that Power Video charges a 15 percent restocking fee on defective merchandise, even if you don't want a replacement. This is nearly three times higher than many companies charge. A \$146 fee on a \$976 purchase is a sad lesson to learn. I wish I had heeded *Video Magazine's* advice to ask before buying about a company's policy on returned goods.

Ken Hodge
West End, North Carolina

Video Magazine welcomes your comments. Please include a phone number, but not a return envelope as the volume of mail does not permit replies. Letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address correspondence to Feedback, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

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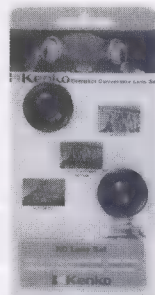
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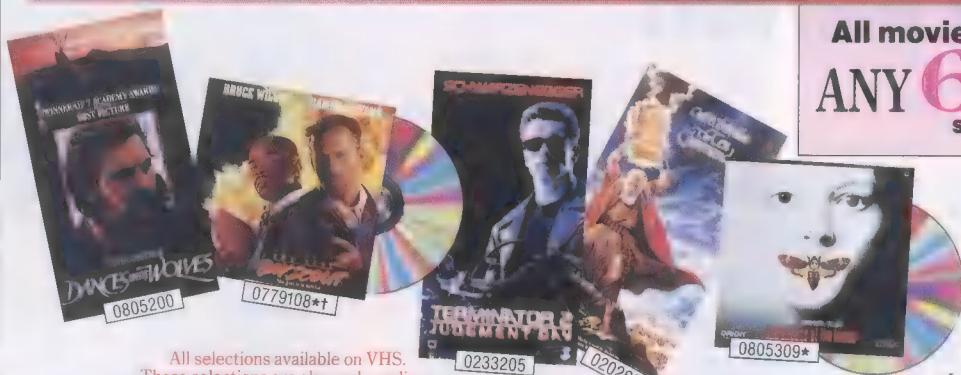
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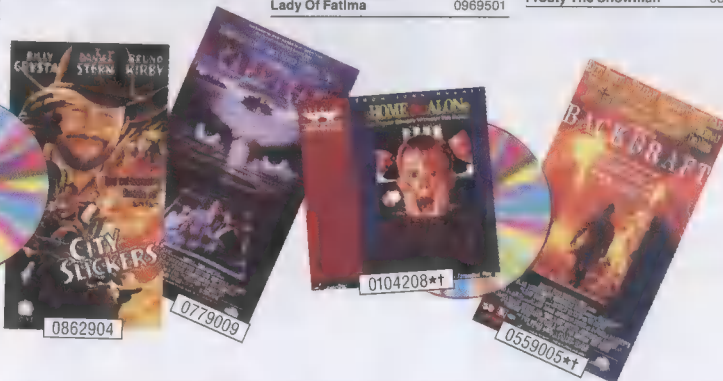
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GAZETTE

Life of Terry

Terry Jones loves *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. And no wonder: Besides playing a fat, shrill woman named Mandy, he also directed and co-wrote the movie, an irreverent tale about Brian of Nazareth, the man born next door to Jesus who is constantly being mistaken for him. Although directing the chaotic Monty Python troupe might seem an exercise in absurdity, Jones enjoyed himself: "It was a great experience," he still says of *Brian*, now part of a Paramount Home Video release package that includes two titles brand new to video (*Life of Python*, a 1989 TV documentary, and *Parrot Sketch Not Included*, a "greatest hits" package), as well as three solo efforts that have been out of print for years (*The Missionary* and *A Private Function*, with Michael Palin, and *Privates on Parade*, with John Cleese).

Although the group's members have not worked together since *Monty Python's Meaning of Life* in 1983, they are still partners in Prominent Features, a development company that counts *A Fish Called Wanda* among its credits. "We all take an interest in each other's films," says Jones, who now lives in suburban London, writing children's books, directing movies (*Personal Services*, *Erik the Viking*) and feeding olives to his pet dog ("She likes olive pits, but just give her one at a time"). He has completed a



Military Bearing: Monty Python's John Cleese hams it up as one of the *Privates on Parade*.



Men With a Mission: Denholm Elliott and Michael Palin in the re-release of *The Missionary*.

screenplay with Shane Common, co-author of *My Left Foot*, about Common's childhood memories of an Irish village. Says Jones: "It's a nice script, very gentle, but an odd thing for me to do."

But what about the Flying Circus? Jones appeared on the 20th-anniversary TV tribute with his mates but thinks it's unlikely the group will ever perform together again. For one thing, original Python member Graham Chapman died in 1989; for another, no one remembers the last group effort with any fondness. "It was very difficult getting everybody together to do *Meaning of Life*," he recalls. "And it was a less-happy writing experience. We're all so different. At one point I felt it was hopeless—we just couldn't go anywhere. I remember waking up one morning with this sinking feeling in my stomach I used to have during exams, and I thought, 'Jesus Christ, this isn't working. It's all going to fall to pieces.'" It didn't, but after the movie's release, "I don't remember any pressure by anyone to do another. I think everyone wanted to move on."

—Tom Soter

Future tense for video retailers

"Fast Forward to the Future" was the theme of this summer's Video Software Dealers Association (VSDA) conven-

tion in Las Vegas, but most of the video retailers we spoke to at the show seemed a little unsure about which button they needed to push to get there.

The threat of direct-broadcast satellite services offering many titles directly to customers has some store owners wondering how they can stay afloat; a seminar on pay-per-view—promoted by a midget wandering the show floor with a sandwich board that read "Pay-Per-View," accompanied by a very tall man wearing a "Home Video" placard—was intended to allay those fears.

The good news is that the concerns have led more dealers than ever to consider laserdiscs. And a number of new-release announcements gave them serious food for thought. On October 1, Image Entertainment will release a CAV boxed set of Ridley Scott's *Alien* as a follow-up to last year's popular (but controversial) *Aliens* set. It will feature previously unseen sequences and a variety of interactive materials. Pioneer will weigh in with boxed sets of all three *Indiana Jones* movies, letterboxed at last, and yet another *Star Trek* box, this one with all six feature films.

Walt Disney Home Video made official the release of *Beauty and the Beast* on October 30. The company is hoping to sell as many as 20 million copies worldwide, even though the video will only be available until April 2, 1993. This figure would far surpass the 14 million copies of *Fantasia* Disney sold last



Package Deal: A CAV boxed set of *Alien*, with Sigourney Weaver, will include unseen footage.

year. A videocassette collector's edition will include not only the complete film, but the full-length work-in-progress version shown at last year's New York Film Festival, plus additional *Beauty* paraphernalia. Unfortunately, the collector's set will arrive in a white box that appears to be even *bigger* than last year's mammoth *Fantasia* set.

At presstime, Disney had yet to complete laserdisc plans for *Beauty* with distributor Image Entertainment, meaning that a same-day release with the tape, a la *Fantasia*, will probably be impossible.

—KK

Made in Japan

Back in the early 1980s when laserdiscs were a truly exotic format and Pioneer's domestic catalog carried fewer than 2,000 titles, Japanese laserdiscs were ■ godsend. Not only did the titles reflect a market significantly larger than the one over here—with ■ lot more classic films and music titles—but Japanese releases included early letterboxed presentations of pictures like *Forbidden Planet*, *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Fall of the Roman Empire*. The only drawback was higher cost, but until the fall of the dollar against the yen in the mid-'80s, even that was manageable, especially since laser was almost entirely an upscale market.

The domestic disc catalog has made major strides over the last few years, catching up to and even surpassing the Japanese market, but there are still ■ large number of Japanese discs readily available as imports and of great interest to Americans. For example, Japanese Warner Bros. has released a laserdisc of

The Concert for Bangladesh, featuring George Harrison and Bob Dylan—a title that has never appeared on disc in the U.S. And despite the recent push toward letterboxing widescreen films, certain major titles—most notably *Das Boot* and *Tora, Tora, Tora*—are still only available in this format from Japan.

Another factor making Japanese laserdiscs newly attractive to Americans is that costs have come down again. The dollar has fallen even further in relation to the yen, but at the same time, laserdisc prices in Japan have fallen by an even greater degree. Thus, the original Japanese edition of Inoshiro Honda's *Godzilla*, in its original Japanese version (which has no Raymond Burr) can now be bought here for around \$85, instead of the \$110 it used to run—and the current version has digital sound as well.

Imports are also now more available than ever, thanks in part to the Tower Video chain, which is carrying limited selections at the direct dollar equivalent



Monster Import: Japanese laserdisc of *Gojira*, or *Godzilla*, King of the Monsters in the U.S.

of Japanese prices. Laser Island (1810 Voorhies Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11235) not only sells imported Japanese discs, but offers an invaluable resource for potential customers: *The Japanese/American Laserdisc Catalog*, a complete two-in-one directory of every disc available from across the Pacific, including accurate prices. This import-disc "bible" is \$12.85 with shipping and handling, and includes a liberal selection of discount coupons for orders from Laser Island.

—Bruce Eder

TIMESHIFT

TEN YEARS AGO IN VIDEO MAGAZINE

RCA scientist Marvin Leedom has developed the first mass-producible electron-beam guide suitable for flat-screen TVs. According to RCA, the sets should be available late in the decade at a price comparable to projection TVs...**It's a surefire idea:** a famous movie star leading an exercise class you can take in your own home. *Jane Fonda's Workout* is the most thorough, balanced and intelligent exercise tape we've seen...

Prices of Japanese electronic equipment are tumbling in the U.S. due to both the value of the dollar and a glut in the market. If current trends accelerate, it might seriously stall the Japanese economy...**As far as** Paramount Home Video is concerned, both the laservision and CED disc formats are here to stay. The company is leading all others in taking over its own disc distribution...**RCA's new CED** *Last Tango in Paris* is the first X-rated videodisc...**According to** Sydney Niekerk, president of a company called Cal Vista, VHS and Beta will be obsolete in 10 years. Niekerk believes his new quarter-inch tape format will replace half-inch because of its easier portability and tape storage...**Reaction** to the long-awaited marketing of JVC's VHS-C format has been rather mild. VHS-C comes after months of meetings about standardizing the so-called 8mm format, which is expected to become the standard portable system...**Election time**, as we all know, is important, but why do some local stations insist on keeping us informed on the latest tally in the race for dogcatcher by running crawls across the bottom of our TV screens during our favorite shows?...**How much longer** can the videodisc limp along? Perhaps a healthier economy would have little effect on its popularity. The videodisc—a good idea, perhaps a great one—may never get off the ground.



October 1982

VIDEOTESTS



VIDEOTEST
653

FISHER VHS VCR

user to program the deck by punching in a four- to seven-digit code from TV list-

The Fisher FVH-8902 is the successor to the FVH-8901 ("Vid-eotests," Feb. '92). Like the 8901, it uses a midmount design, with the tape transport centered right-to-left on the chassis. The new model adds VCR Plus, which allows ■

ings. It also slightly improves performance, and adds a shuttle control on the remote and an extra language—French—to its existing English/Spanish onscreen menus. Yet, amazingly, the price is \$100 lower.

Midmount VCRs have become commonplace over the last two years. The design reduces vibration and improves stability of the transport. Most midmount VCRs add stabilizing rollers to help tape run more smoothly and to improve signal-to-noise ratios. The symmetry of the design also appeals to design-conscious buyers, although Fisher chose to hide the front panel with a decorative

Fisher FVH-8902 VHS VCR



Price: \$600

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
12.1 lbs.; 3.7 x 16-5/8
x 14 inches

Tape Format & Speeds: VHS; SP, LP, EP

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search:
SP 5x, LP 10x, EP 21x

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 4 min. for T-120

Remote Pause: front panel, synchronized

Remote Control: IR wireless with shuttle dial; exposed buttons

for VCR power, channel up/down, pause/still, rewind/search, play, stop, fast forward/search, TV power, channel up/down, volume up, volume down, CATV power and channel up/down; and covered buttons for set, TV mode, CATV mode, VCR mode, VCR Plus, program, clear, display, auto program, channel erase, VCR/TV, 10-digit keypad, 100/enter, input, auto tracking, audio out, blank search, index, reset, memory, tape speed, audio dub, video dub, record (2)

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: index with auto mark

Audio: linear mono, hi-fi AFM stereo

Tuning Method: frequency synthesis

Channel Selectors: programmable scan on VCR, scan plus random access on remote

Preset Method: auto/manual program, manual add/erase

Cable Tuning Range: 125 channels

Timer: 6-event/1-year

Special Features: still frame, frame advance, slow motion, search in FF and rew., blank tape

HIGHLIGHTS

With excellent video performance at the SP speed, ■ plethora of features and its \$600 price tag, Fisher's FVH-8902 ranks as a real bargain among VHS hi-fi VCRs. It has all the editing features sophisticated users need, like a flying erase head, audio dub, insert edit and frame advance, and adds VCR Plus programming to satisfy technophobic users. However, performance at the six-hour EP speed does not stand out, and audio quality is good to average. We rate ease of use and overall performance very good. For those seeking a VHS hi-fi deck with all the bells and whistles, and who prefer to record at SP, this one's definitely worth ■ look.

search, synchro edit, flying erase head, audio dub, video dub, insert edit, auto rewind, midmount design, English/Spanish/French onscreen display, digital auto tracking, auto head cleaner, front panel A/V inputs, counter memory, VCR Plus programming

Absent Features: play effects on LP, record speed change on VCR, hi-fi audio recording level controls, headphone jack, titles/graphics, jog dial

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 240 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted video—46.1 SP, 44.6 LP, 42.3 EP; weighted video—52.1 SP, 50 LP, 49.3 EP; chroma AM—46 SP, 44.3 LP, 40.1 EP; chroma PM—40.7 SP, 39.5 LP, 37.4 EP

Audio Frequency Response: hi-fi—20 Hz-20 kHz, +1.2/-2 dB, all speeds; linear (-3 dB)—100 Hz-7.5 kHz SP, 100 Hz-4 kHz LP



Programming Power: Fisher's FVH-8902 adds the convenience of VCR Plus programming to the midmount transport design used on its top 1991 models.

cover.

Most of the deck's other attractive features are carried over from last year. These include a flying erase head, audio and video dubbing, front input jacks for easy editing and dubbing from a camcorder, an index search system with auto marking, digital auto tracking and auto head cleaning. The flying erase head makes very clean edits, and the synchro pause connector facilitates one-touch editing when combined with a Sanyo or Fisher camcorder having a pause output.

Even with so many features, we found a few omissions. Unlike last year's

continued on page 32

and EP

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range:
79.5 dB

Linear Audio S/N:
43.6 dB

Audio Distortion: hi-fi—0.3%, linear—1.1%

RATINGS

Picture: excellent at SP, good at EP

Audio: hi-fi—good, linear—average

Ease of Use:
very good

Overall: very good

VIDEOTEST
654

MITSUBISHI S-VHS-C camcorder

The HS-C35U is at the top of a line of three unusual camcorders that mark Mitsubishi's re-entry into the camcorder market. It comes with three interchangeable front lens elements, each of which offers a 6x zoom range. The widest gives a horizontal coverage of about 60 degrees at full wide-angle, which is one and a half times wider than conventional zooms. The longest element magnifies the wide-angle image by 14.5x. You get the same range you would with a traditional 6x zoom using 0.6x wide-angle and 1.5x telephoto adapters. The advantage is that the HS-C35U's lenses operate throughout the 6x zoom range.

It carries a full package of standard features. These include a trigger-operated fader (to white), a backlight compensator useful for shooting in the direction of the sun, a one-page digital memory titler with a selection of eight colors (with normal and reverse images), auto/sun/artificial light white balance with a lock mode; and soft video, which simulates the gentler contrast gradation of movies. However, we wish a manual iris control and an external microphone jack had also been included.

The HS-C35U is about the size of the shoe-style compact camcorders from

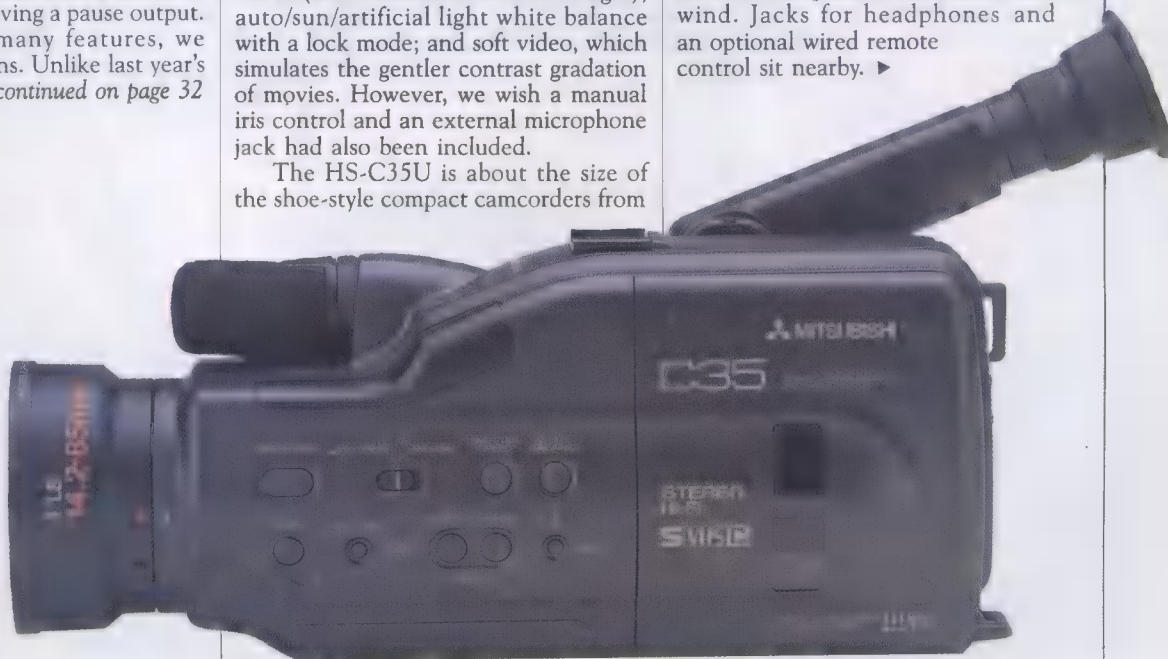
HIGHLIGHTS

The Mitsubishi HS-C35U is first camcorder to bring interchangeable

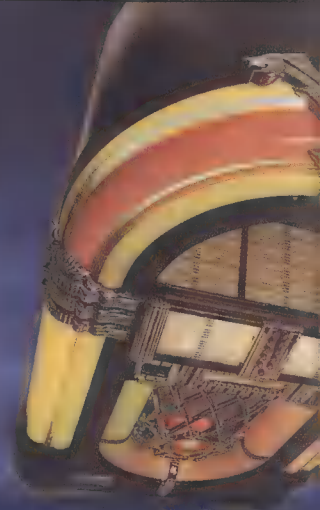
lenses down to prices most consumers can afford. At \$1,699, it offers the extra resolution of S-VHS-C, the clear sound of stereo hi-fi audio and all the features most home videographers need. Three lenses—wide-angle, normal and telephoto—come with the camcorder. Each operates over a 6x zoom range, and attaches with an easy-to-use bayonet mount. Picture quality is very good, hi-fi sound quality is good, and ease of use is good to very good. Its overall very good performance makes it one of the most attractive options in S-VHS-C camcorders—especially with the extra lenses.

Sony, but a bit wider. A viewfinder extends two inches further back. The viewfinder folds 180 degrees forward over the hand grip for easier carrying and storage.

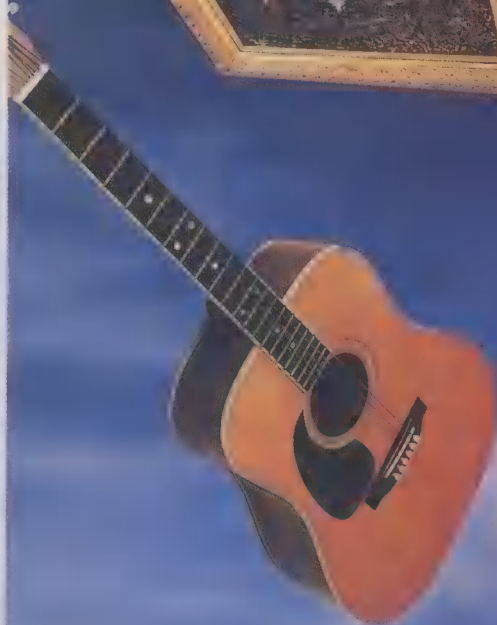
In a column near the rear right edge are an edit control jack and output jacks for S-video, video, stereo audio and DC power for the RF adapter. This is a nice change of pace from the many S-VHS-C camcorders that use a non-standard, multipin A/V connector. The edit control jack allows one-touch editing when used with a synchro edit-equipped Mitsubishi VCR—the VCR will automatically record when the camcorder is in play mode, and pause when the camcorder is in pause, fast forward or rewind. Jacks for headphones and an optional wired remote control sit nearby. ▶



Variable Vision: Mitsubishi's HS-C35 is the first S-VHS-C camcorder with interchangeable lenses.



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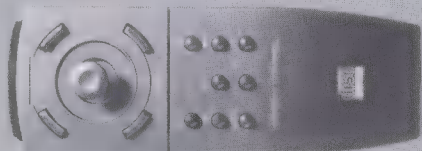
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PHILIPS

The hand grip is conventional, with the run/pause button at the back and the zoom rocker at the top right edge. Other camera controls, like white balance and shutter speed, occupy the usual places on the left side. The rear panel has switches for power and eject, and buttons that control the onscreen menu, the titler, the counter and the soft picture option.

The only unusual controls are those for playback. Play, stop and pause hide behind the viewfinder when it is folded down for shooting—you must raise it to play a tape in the camcorder. Controls for rewind/search and fast forward/search sit at the top of the rear panel, around the corner from the other playback controls. These double for record review, which lets you watch a tape forwards or backwards while remaining in record mode.

Each lens has a button that frees it from the camcorder's lens mount. The lenses simply twist off and on. All three have threads for 66mm accessories. The ranges of these lenses overlap—if you don't want to carry all three, you can leave the normal lens behind, even though it is the smallest. The wide-angle lens is a must indoors, for those times

when you can't move far enough away to get everyone in the picture. The telephoto lens is perfect for outdoor shooting, where you often can't get close enough to a subject.

Basic shooting is fairly straightforward. A switch on the left side allows selection of manual, full auto and auto lock modes. In the manual position you can control all functions. In full auto, focus and white balance are automatic and shutter speed is 1/60-second. In auto lock, only power, zoom, counter, wind noise and transport controls operate.

The display button calls up not only the onscreen displays, but also the on-page menu. The menu button cycles through options for tape speed, title color, title reverse, S-VHS set, tape remaining, audio monitor, edit, interval record, insert edit and date/time set. Adjustments are made with the reverse title/set button. The menu system does reduce button clutter, but all selections require more button punches.

The awkward placement of the playback controls might be fixed by a good remote control, but we did not have a chance to test the HS-C35U's optional wired remote. Mitsubishi supplies an adapter that allows playback of the

S-VHS-C cassettes in an S-VHS VCR (or a VHS deck with Quasi S-VHS playback capability), and playback of VHS-C cassettes in a VHS machine. The company seems to be encouraging playback on a full-sized VCR. Of course, you can always play tapes by hooking the camcorder up to a TV set or a VCR, and all the necessary cables are included.

You can't record from a VCR or another camcorder, as there are no inputs for taping from A/V sources. Tracking adjustment using repeated push and hold operation of the play button is unusual, but seems to work and is rarely needed.

The manual explains each option, but because of a sketchy table of contents and index, you may have to read a whole chapter to find the information you seek. However, the manual has excellent diagrams of the controls with page references for further instructions. Ease of use is good to very good.

Because the camcorder has no video or audio inputs, we made measurements using tapes recorded on other machines and from tapes made through the camera. Picture quality is very good, among the best in the S-VHS-C camp, and definitely better than that of Mitsubishi's

Now! Professional wireless sound for your camcorder.

Outstanding sound is now easier than ever. New ATR45W wireless microphone uses professional VHF technology miniaturized specifically for camcorder use by Audio-Technica U.S.

Superior sound starts with a quality ultra-miniature condenser microphone complete with clothing clip and foam windscreen. Each wireless system is easily switched to either of two 170 MHz VHF frequencies (not the over-crowded 49 MHz band) for minimum interference. Earphone output provides real-time monitoring of the signal.

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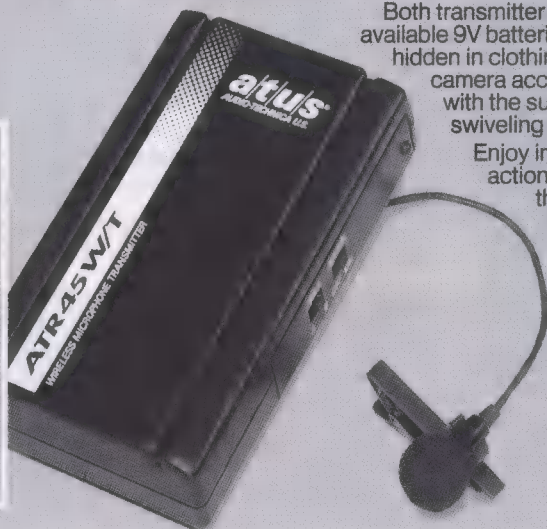
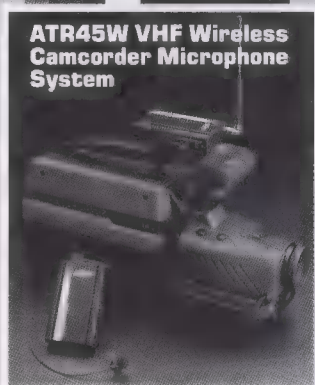
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ATR45W VHF Wireless Camcorder Microphone System



other S-VHS-C model, the HS-CX7U ("Videotests," Apr. '92), probably because we could adjust tracking more accurately.

Audio quality on the stereo hi-fi tracks is good and on the mono linear track it is fair. The substandard performance of the mono track should probably be ignored—because this camcorder has no audio dub feature, you'll probably only use its hi-fi tracks, anyway.

We rate the HS-C35U very good overall. Its simple operation, dependable performance, reasonable price and interchangeable lenses make it a top contender among S-VHS-C camcorders. Its size, performance and price are comparable to those of JVC's GR-S505U, but the two camcorders carry very different feature packages. See both before you buy, so you can decide which features are most important to you.

Mitsubishi HS-C35U S-VHS-C Camcorder

Price: \$1,699

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 2.1 lbs. without battery and cassette; 4-5/8 x 4-3/8 x 12-1/4 inches with normal lens

Image Sensor: 1/2-inch CCD, 410,000 gross pixels

Lenses: 3—f/1.8, 6x (5-54mm) normal; f/1.8, 6x (14.2-85mm) tele; f/1.8, 6x (5.9-35.4mm) wide-angle

Filter Diameter: 66mm

Minimum Focusing Distance: about 1 inch from lens at wide-angle

Autofocus: auto switchable to powered manual

Minimum Illumination: 9.3 lux for 50 IRE

Iris: auto with BLC

Auto Fade: to/from white

Shutter Speeds (sec.): 1/60 (normal), 1/100, 1/250, 1/500, 1/1,000, 1/2,000, 1/10,000

White Balance: auto, switchable to indoor/outdoor/lock

Viewfinder: electronic, with diopter adjustment and onscreen indicators for real-time counter, title color, battery remaining, record mode, counter memory, tape remaining, S-VHS, tape speed, clock battery, battery/dew/tape, soft video, low light, manual white balance, shutter speed, fade, manual focus, date and time

VCR Controls: play, stop, pause, fast forward/search, rewind/search

Microphone: stereo

Jacks: S-video out, video out, DC out for RFU, stereo audio out, edit out, remote control, headphones, DC input

Tape Formats & Speeds: S-VHS-C, VHS-C; SP, EP

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search: 3x SP, 7x EP

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 4-3/4 min./7-1/4

min. for TC-20/TC-30

Remote Pause: through wired remote control or edit jack

Remote Control: optional wired with buttons for stopwatch, fade, rewind/search, still, stop, start/stop, play, fast forward/search

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: auto mark under certain circumstances

Audio: linear mono, hi-fi AFM stereo

Titles/Graphics: one-page digital superimposer in one of eight colors with reverse, and date/time record

Special Features: three zoom lenses, still frame, counter memory, insert edit, wind filter, synchro edit, interval record, flying erase head, auto head cleaner

Absent Features: frame advance, slow motion, speed play, audio dub, video dub, auto rewind, A/V input, mic input, manual iris

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: S-VHS-C—400 lines, VHS-C—240 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted luminance—43.7 SP, 41.6 EP; weighted luminance—50.2 SP, 48.6 EP; unweighted video—44.7 SP, 43.8 EP; weighted video—50.2 SP, 50.7 EP; chroma AM—46.4 SP, 42.9 EP; chroma PM—41.3 SP, 39.4 EP

Audio Frequency Response: hi-fi—20 Hz-20 kHz, +3.2/-1.9 dB (both speeds); linear, -3 dB—100 Hz-5 kHz SP, 100 Hz-4 kHz EP

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 74.6 dB

Linear Audio S/N: 42.6 dB

Audio Distortion: hi-fi—0.4%, linear—0.9%

RATINGS

Picture: very good

Audio: hi-fi—good, linear—fair

Ease of Use: good/very good

Overall: very good

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VIDEOTESTS



Capable Combi: The CLD-D701 is Pioneer's newest top-of-the-line combi player, with jog/shuttle dial, digital effects on CLV discs and side changing.

VIDEOTEST
655

PIONEER combi player

combi players, which are dependable performers at less costly prices. One type

Pioneer offers three lines of laserdisc players: the laserdisc-only Reference Series, currently represented by the \$3,500 LD-S2; the Elite Series combi players, which match the LD-S2 in looks and approach its performance; and two types of basic

of basic player functions as a one-side laserdisc player and a five-CD changer. The other type plays only one CD at a time, but offers a wider variety of feature packages.

The CLD-D701 offers virtually every feature available in a laserdisc player. It plays laserdiscs, CDs and CD-Video discs. Pioneer's Alpha-Turn mechanism plays both sides of a laserdisc automatically, while maintaining the same orientation of the three-beam laser pickup with respect to the direction of disc travel. Digital picture memory allows a user to get still frames, slow motion and clear search on CLV discs. All laserdisc

HIGHLIGHTS

The CLD-D701 combi player replaces the CLD-3090 as the top of

Pioneer's basic line. It carries all the features you could want in a laserdisc player, including automatic side-changing and digital effects for clear search and slow-motion pictures from CLV discs. It plays all sizes of laserdiscs and CDs. Its picture and sound are both excellent, and comparable to those of other top-notch combi players. Ease of use is very good to excellent, hindered only by the lack of some controls on the front panel. We rate it excellent overall. At \$1,200, it's priced right.

Pioneer CLD-D701 Laserdisc Player

Price: \$1,200

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
19 lbs.; 5-3/8 x 16-5/8
x 17-1/4 inches

Disc Formats & Speeds: LD—12- and 8-inch, CDV—5-inch, CD—5- and 3-inch

Direct Search: max. 10 sec. on one side

Cue & Review Scan Search: max 30 sec. on one side, approx. 20x

Jacks: 2 S-video outputs, 2 video outputs, 2 pairs of stereo audio outputs, Toslink optical digital audio output, SR remote control input and output

Remote Pause: SR remote in and out

Remote Control: IR wireless with jog/shuttle dial and buttons for power, stop/eject, digital/analog/CX, audio L/R/stereo, A-B repeat, one-shot memory, display, program, edit, chapter/time, 10-digit keypad, +10, clear, digital level control, hilite/intro, pause, scan reverse, play, scan forward, skip reverse, skip forward, jog mode, side A, side B, plus rockers for still/step forward or reverse, multi-speed forward and reverse, and multispeed - and +

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: frame, time, chapter/track and points A-B

Analog Audio: hi-fi AFM stereo/dual mono

Digital Audio: 1-bit DLC stereo/dual mono D/A converter with double-step noise shaping

Titles/Graphics: multiple displays for frame, time, time remaining, total time, chapter/track and programming

Special Features: digital effects, automatic side-changing, still frame, bidirectional frame advance, bidirectional slow motion (1/2x-1/90x) and speed play (2x-3x), repeat playback, repeat play, auto program edit, digital TBC, soft picture, digital memory, one-shot memory, last memory function

Absent Features: RF input and output

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 425 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): luminance—49.5 unweighted, 53.8 weighted; video—48.7 unweighted, 55.8 weighted; chroma AM—47.6, chroma PM—38.5

Audio Frequency Response: digital rated—4 Hz-20 kHz, measured—10 Hz-20 kHz, +0/-0.5 dB; analog measured—20 Hz-20 kHz, +3.3/-2.0 dB

Dynamic Range (dB): digital rated—115, measured—104 (our

measurement limit)

Audio S/N (dB): digital rated—95, measured—94.6; analog measured—67.1

Audio Distortion: digital rated—0.0018%; measured—0.002%; analog measured—0.03%

RATINGS

Picture: very good/excellent

Audio: excellent

Ease of Use: very good/excellent

Overall: very good/excellent

AVOID COMMON MISTAKES RIGHT FROM THE START.

FISHER'S NEW Hi-Fi VCR WAS CREATED TO RECORD, playback and relieve anxiety. It's virtually goof-proof. No unhappy endings where beginnings were supposed to be. With **VCR Plus+** built into it, you record your favorite show simply by pressing the show code number that appears in your local TV listings. If you rent a lot of movies, you'll appreciate the self-cleaning heads. You can even set the clock without a Ph.D. Get a great picture and great sound and *avoid mistakes*.



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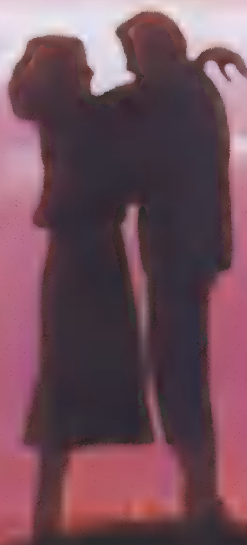
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4-Head Mid-Mount
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Recorder

- ☐ VHS Hi-Fi Stereo Recording and Playback
- ☐ MTS/dbx Stereo and SAP (Second Audio Program) Decoder
- ☐ Flying Erase Head
- ☐ VCR Plus+™ Programming
- ☐ Programmed Universal Remote Control with Shuttle

The End



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Circle 9 on Reader Service Card.

players produce these effects with CAV discs, but CAVs are rarer and more expensive than CLVs. The digital picture circuitry also incorporates a timebase corrector to reduce picture jitter.

The CLD-D701 offers several small improvements over the CLD-3090. A film mode switches off all on-screen displays as well as those on the player, to more closely recreate the movie experience. A soft picture button reduces the noise common in old movies. The most commonly used buttons on the remote are backlit.

Separate audio and video circuit boards with shielding minimize interference between the signals. Picture reproduction may be improved by using the S-video outputs, which use a high-performance comb filter better than the ones found in many video monitors.

Audio, too, receives careful handling. The digital-to-analog converter is a one-bit DLC (direct linear conversion) type with high-speed and high-density pulseflow, putting the CLD-D701 in the same sonic league with many good CD players. As on many past Pioneer combi players, a direct CD mode shuts off all video circuitry to avoid interference, and opens the disc tray only part way to speed up operation.

Up to 24 laserdisc chapters or CD tracks can be programmed; the programming can access chapters on both sides of a laserdisc. Two segments of video can be selected for repeat playback, and four still frames can be captured in sequence using the one-shot program. Eight repeat playback options are possible with laserdiscs and the video portion of CD-Vs. There are seven options with

CDs and the audio portion of CD-Vs.

Auto program editing juggles chapter/track playback to fit into user-designated time periods, so you can easily fit the maximum number of CD tracks on an audio cassette. A last memory function stores the disc position and continues playback from a point just before you turned off the power.

The rear panel has numerous outputs, including two for S-video, two for video, two pairs for stereo audio, and a Toslink optical output for digital audio. It also has an in/out pair for Pioneer's SR remote control link system, which allows integrated system operation when the CLD-D701 is used with a Pioneer audio/video receiver. There are no RF inputs or outputs—if your TV set has no audio/video input, you'll have to daisy-chain the CLD-V701 with a VCR, or use an external RF adapter.

The remote control has a jog/shuttle dial at the bottom, with a mode button that glows red when engaged. The layout is conventional—side selectors and buttons for eject, audio monitor and power at the top, a 10-digit keypad in the middle and transport functions like play, skip and scan near the bottom.

The transport buttons can be backlit for four seconds at the touch of a switch on the remote's left side. An unusual addition is the digital level button, which lets the user control the digital audio volume from the shuttle dials on the remote and on the player.

Having few controls on the player contributes to its handsome appearance, but the omissions impair operation from the front panel. The remote offers a complete range of functions except dis-

play off, single play, direct CD, digital memory, random playback, soft picture and film mode, all of which must be selected from the front panel. The remote should be regarded as the primary operating control.

The disc tray is a bit less robust than trays on early models and may require gentle handling. It offers an extremely wide range of play options, almost all of which are easily accomplished from the remote. Ease of operation is very good to excellent.

Except for the chroma PM result, the CLD-D701's picture measurements are among the best achieved by combi players. Compared to them, it is excellent, although a bit short of the performance levels achieved by Pioneer's laserdisc-only LD-S2, which is almost three times as expensive. There is no noticeable picture deterioration during search because whole frames are displayed through digital memory. However, the search seems like a slightly jerky presentation of the sampled still frames. Pioneer's top-of-the-line laserdisc players of the late '80s had much smoother digital search. Audio performance is excellent, in many cases beyond our measurement capabilities.

We rate the CLD-D701 excellent overall. Only a few machines—including Panasonic's LX-1000 and Mitsubishi's M-V8000—offer similar feature packages, and the CLD-D701 compares favorably with both in price and performance. We recommend you check out at least a couple of these top combi players even if you're only in the market for a budget player. The digital effects and side-changing may win you over. ■

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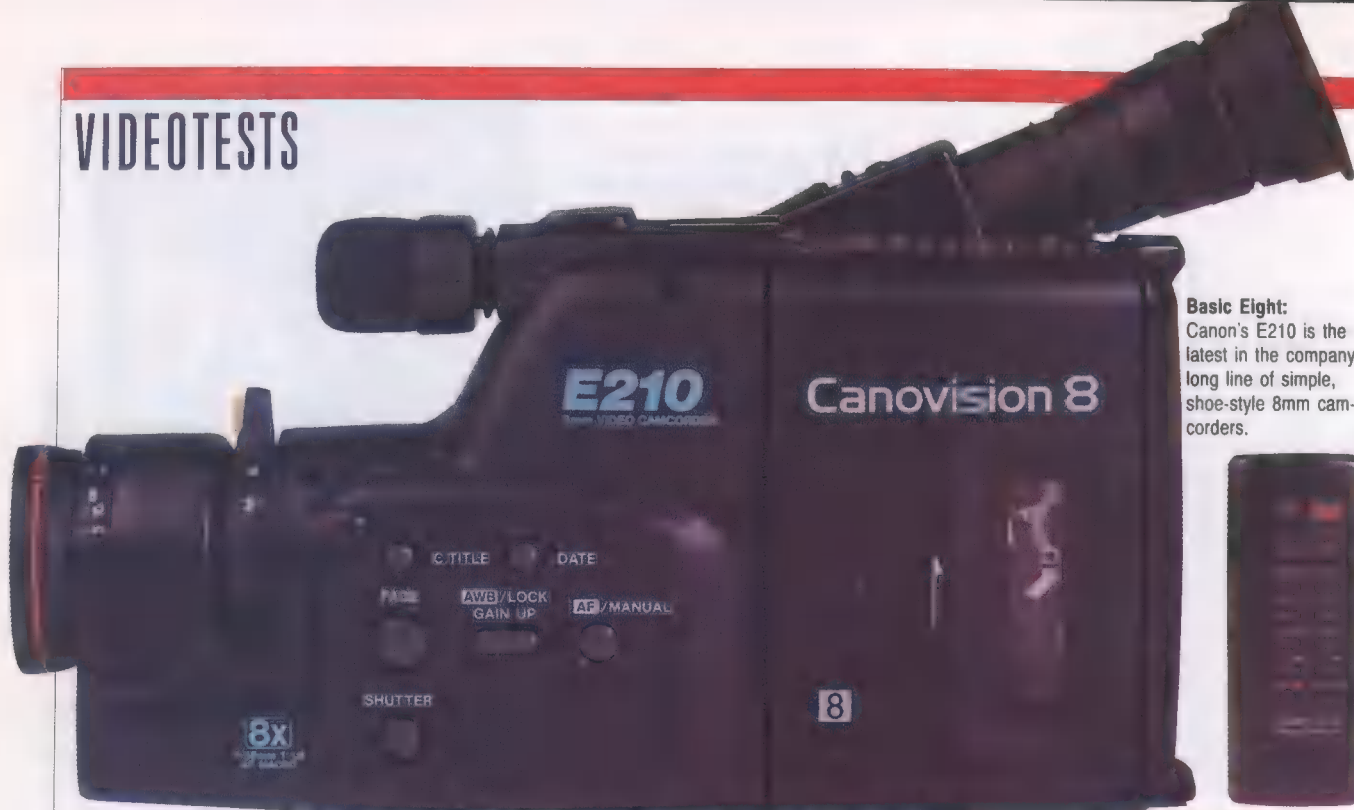
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Simulated picture shown.
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VIDEOTESTS



Basic Eight: Canon's E210 is the latest in the company's long line of simple, shoe-style 8mm camcorders.

VIDEOTEST
656

CANON 8mm camcorder

against many of the latest camcorders, which tend to be covered with buttons

The Canon E210 echoes the basic design goals—and for that matter, the basic design—of many past Canon shoe-style camcorders. It is intended primarily for casual family video, where ease of use is a top priority. The E210 stands out sharply

for fancy features like digital zoom, menu systems, image stabilization and exotic titles. Some may find the E210's lack of bells and whistles frustrating; others may find it comforting.

The few camera control buttons are large. Their shape and surface texture help you find and use them by touch, rather than by looking. It uses infrared autofocus, which focuses quickly, without hunting back and forth as do some through-the-lens systems. However, infrared autofocus fails in more situations—such as on diagonal subjects and through windows and screens—than TTL systems.

Canon E210 8mm Camcorder

Price: \$1,299

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 2.1 lbs. without battery, light and cassette; battery—0.4 lb.; 5 x 4-3/8 x 11-7/8 inches

Image Sensor: 1/3-inch CCD, 250,000 effective pixels

Lens: f/1.8, 8x (7-56mm) power zoom with macro

Filter Diameter: 37mm

Minimum Focusing Distance: 2 feet tele, 1/2 inch wide-angle

Autofocus: infrared

Minimum Illumination: 4.2 lux, gain normal; 2.7 lux, gain-up

Iris: auto with gain-up option

Auto Fade: hold-down type

Shutter Speeds (sec.): 1/60 (normal), 1/100, 1/1,000, 1/4,000

White Balance: auto with lock

Viewfinder: 0.6-inch CRT electronic, with diopter and onscreen indicators for manual focus, WB lock, shutter speed, gain up, line in,

transport operation, self/interval timer mode, character titler, scrolling, counter, tape warning, battery warning, dew, time and date/clock battery warning

Viewfinder Controls: diopter focus and grip/viewer angle

VCR Controls: play, stop, rewind/search, fast forward/search, record start/pause (separate buttons on remote)

Microphone: electret condenser

Jacks: video in/out, DC out for RF adapter, mono audio in/out

Tape Format & Speed: 8mm SP

Video Heads: 2

Cue & Review Search: forward—9x, reverse—7x; high-speed search from FF/rew mode—20x locking/non-locking

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 6.5/5.5 min. for P6-120

Remote Pause: only through IR

Remote Control: IR wireless with wide/tele rocker and buttons for start/stop, fade start/stop, counter reset, on-screen, tape return, rewind/search, fast forward/search, stop, play, record and still

Audio: hi-fi AFM mono

Titles/Graphics: 1 page, 2 lines, up to 16 characters each with horizontal scroll

Timer: 10-second de-

HIGHLIGHTS

Canon hasn't changed its basic, shoe-style 8mm camcorders much

in the last few years, but it really hasn't had to—it's a proven design that might not be improved all that much by adding bells and whistles. The E210 has all the basics, plus a few useful extras: scrollable character titles, gain-up capability, 20x high-speed search and a powered accessory shoe that accommodates an optional six-watt light. The good picture, average audio and very good ease of use make it a good buy, although at \$1,299, it's a bit more expensive than some of its competitors.

lay/continuous record, 10-second delay/30-second record, 1/2-second record every 10, 20 or 60 seconds

Special Features: FlexiGrip, sports finder, still frame, insert edit, hot shoe for optional light, flying erase head, counter memory (tape return), optional 6-watt video light

Absent Features: LANC remote control jack, mic jack, earphone jack, stereo audio, indexing, auto macro focus

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: recorder—240/250 lines, camera—320

lines

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted video—41.6, weighted video—47.6, chroma AM—40.8, chroma PM—37.5

Audio Frequency Response: 50 Hz-14 kHz, +0.1/-3 dB; -8.7 dB at 20 Hz; -9.5 dB at 20 kHz

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 71.1 dB

Audio Distortion: 0.4%

RATINGS

Picture: good

Audio: average

Ease of Use: very good

Overall: good



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increases the contrast ratio by 20%. And an advanced three-line digital comb filter significantly enhances color accuracy and improves picture quality.

The picture source is a Pioneer LaserDisc Player, a

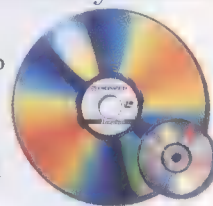
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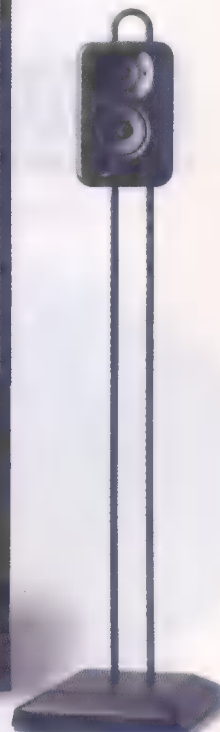
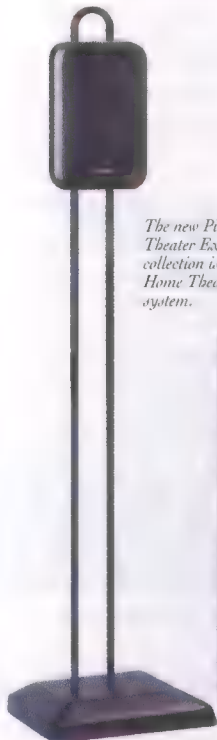
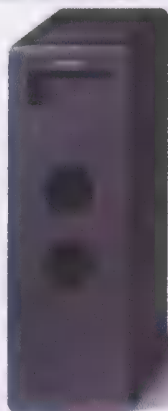
To maximize the quality of Surround Sound, we've assembled a superb new package of perfectly matched modular speakers specially designed to deliver a theater-like experience.

Of course, there's a lot more to tell, so call us at 1-800-PIONEER for more information. Or, drop by a Pioneer Home Theater dealer. You'll find just what you'd expect from the leaders in audio and video: Home theater so advanced, you don't just watch it."



Our new ProVision SD-P5065K Projection TV incorporates a host of technological innovations. Pictured here is an actual on-screen image.

The new Pioneer S-V401K Home Theater Experience Speaker collection is customized for our Home Theater Surround Sound system.



PIONEER
The Art of Entertainment

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Canon's unique FlexiGrip combines the grip and viewfinder. It rotates a full 180 degrees for comfortable high- and low-angle shooting. A large sports-type finder lets you operate the camera from a distance of a foot or two, without pressing it to your eye. This grip, used on many Canon camcorders, makes it easy to shoot over the heads of a crowd or from ground level.

The E210's white balance lock lets

you achieve correct color balance in situations where auto white balance doesn't usually work well, such as a subject with one dominant color. It also has a gain-up button for improved low-light performance, three high shutter speeds for shooting sports, a character generator, and an infrared remote control with an unusual fade start/stop button that produces fully automatic fades, even though the fade button on the cam-

corder is the hold-down type.

Among the desirable optional accessories is a six-watt video light that slips into the accessory shoe and draws power from the camcorder's battery. Such an arrangement minimizes weight but halves the life of each battery charge, so we strongly recommend buying and carrying extra batteries if you use the light.

Since it is designed for simplicity, some common features have been omitted, like jacks for LANC remote control (for use with LANC-compatible editing controllers), an external microphone and an earphone. Others omitted to lower cost include stereo sound and digital graphic memory for superimposing. With this lack of features, it's not the kind of camcorder you'd use to win a video contest, but for preserving memories, it's more than good enough.

It is very similar to the Canon E250 ("Videotests," July '92) except the E210 has a shorter zoom range, fewer features and smaller price tag.

All the controls are in the places you'd expect—zoom rocker under the right-hand fingers, run/stop button under the right thumb, and camera controls positioned for left-hand access. Unlike many of Canon's shoe-style camcorders, the VCR controls are on the top panel, instead of doubled up with the camera controls on the left side. The top also carries controls for the character generator, which produces one page with two lines of 16 characters each. You can scroll a title from the right to the center of the screen, where it remains until you turn it off, or scroll it off with a four-second pause at screen center.

It uses the old-style manual focus lever with a manual macro focus release on the end, and a manual focusing ring. This type of setup doesn't offer the point-and-shoot ease of an inner-focus, auto macro lens, but it does have advantages. The focus ring is faster and more accurate than the powered focus buttons on most newer camcorders. The manual zoom lever lets you frame shots quickly, and removes some of the temptation to zoom in and out constantly with the power zoom rocker.

The remote control duplicates many of the buttons on the top panel plus some for camera control. Near the front are a zoom rocker and buttons for start/stop and fade start/stop. Behind those in two columns are others for counter reset, tape return, onscreen, and VCR transport functions like play and stop.

The camcorder is very easy to use. Most of the controls you use during shooting are grouped on the left side, and most have only one function. The ones you use most are larger than the

continued on page 40

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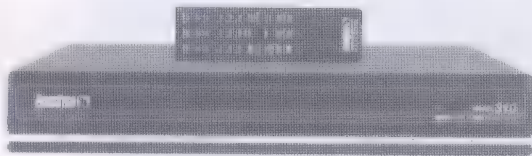
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Circle 57 on Reader Service Card.

VHS VCR

continued from page 17

model, the FVH-8902 has no mic jack or time-remaining readout. It also lacks clean search and still at the LP speed, a record speed switch on the VCR (although there's one on the remote), hi-fi audio record level controls, a jog dial, a headphone jack and a titler, most of which you would expect to find on an editing-oriented VCR such as this.

We think doors covering VCR front panels are a nuisance, although we appreciate their looks. The FVH-8902 is unique in that its door holds no buttons or displays, and thus can be removed entirely without impairing the functionality of the VCR. You can also just leave it open all the time, if you wish, then close it when company comes and you want the system to look good. The front-panel displays shine through the door, so you can monitor the deck's functions even when the door is closed.

The left display shows left and right audio record levels and which audio tracks are active. The other display carries the clock, counter, channel indicator and operating legends. The front panel has jacks for video and stereo audio input and pause. The pause jack is actually a synchro edit connector compatible with similarly equipped Fisher and Sanyo VCRs and camcorders. Below the hatch sit an input selector, a picture sharpness control and transport buttons. Daylight-saving time and all clear buttons hide in small holes that prevent accidental use.

The top is a little unusual in that there are rows of ventilating holes near each side. The rear panel sports the usual jacks—one set of RCAs each for video/stereo audio input and output, and F-connectors for RF input and output.

The remote control is fairly long and skinny with a rotary shuttle control near the curved rear and exposed buttons in three distinct groups toward the back of the control. The forward group has a 10-digit keypad and various VCR controls under a flip-up panel. Below are buttons that can be programmed to operate most brands of TV sets and cable boxes. Between those and the shuttle dial are buttons for transport functions (like play and rewind), VCR power and channel up/down.

The VCR Plus circuitry operates like the VCR Plus remote—just punch in a numerical code from your local TV listings or TV Guide, and select one-time, daily or weekly programming. The VCR converts the numerical code into a channel number and start and stop times, and displays them onscreen.

Unlike the dedicated VCR Plus remote and some VCR Plus-equipped VCRs from RCA, the FVH-8902 can't control a cable box. If you use a cable box, remember to turn the box on and select the proper channel yourself before you leave. The deck also offers conventional onscreen programming, so even if you can't find your TV Guide, you can still timeshift. The only down side to this system is that either way, you must turn on the TV set to program the VCR.

The front-panel inputs and synchro edit jack make editing easier, but the frame advance makes it more difficult. There are no frame advance buttons—you must hit the pause/still button repeatedly to step through a tape. There is provision for audio dubbing, but only from line-level sources, since there is no mic jack.

Although the remote has a lot of buttons, Fisher grouped them by function and gave them various sizes, shapes and background colors for easy differentiation. Ease of use is very good.

In video performance, the FVH-8902 is like the FVH-8901 because it is excellent at the SP speed, but only good at EP. LP performance has improved to very good. If you make most of your tapes in SP, you'll have a hard time finding better performance. If you like to cram as many shows as possible onto one tape, though, you might do better elsewhere. Audio performance is good on the hi-fi tracks and average on the linear track.

We rate the FVH-8902 very good overall. Its outstanding points are impressive video performance at the SP speed, and a wide range of features for a deck in its price range. However, it lacks a few features you may consider important, and at the EP speed its performance falls a bit shy of the best VHS VCRs. If you're looking for a reasonably priced editing deck, you'll find few that can match it feature-for-feature. ■

TECH TIPS

Infinite wisdom

If you add titles using a camcorder superimposer, you can create an "infinity title" effect on your edited tapes. Connect the camcorder to your VCR's input, memorize the title on the camcorder, then point the lens toward the monitor screen. Experiment with the macro setting and focus range to get the look you want, then press record on the VCR.

Dan Resciniti
Fresno, California

Magic marker

At the beginning of each camcorder tape you shoot, and at the start of each new event on the tape, record for 30 seconds with the date/time readout activated and the lens cap on. A verbal comment about the event and location can be added at the same time. This aids in identifying an unmarked tape, and in finding recorded segments on the tape. It also provides a buffer at the beginning of the tape, protecting the first scene from damage when rewinding, loading or unloading.

Arthur Howie
Aurora, Colorado

Two-camera trick

If your subjects are willing to cooperate, you can produce videos with one camcorder that look like multicamera shoots. Decide on a signal you can use to cue your talent. When you want to change camera angles—perhaps to focus on one of the subjects, or to get an over-the-shoulder shot of one listening to another talking—cue the talent, then hit the camcorder's run/pause button. Now move the camcorder, hit the run/pause button again, and cue the talent one second later. The delay will offset the time it takes the camcorder to begin recording.

Eddie Goldberger
Tucson, Arizona

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▲ UTILITY PLAYER

With its detachable cable-compatible TV tuner and 8mm recording capability, Sony's GV-S50 Video Walkman TVCR can play a variety of roles. You can use it as a second VCR to record TV shows with the help of a six-event/one-month timer, use it to play back 8mm tapes on the flip-up, four-inch color LCD screen or enlist it as a field monitor during video shooting sessions. Hi-fi stereo audio is featured on the 2-1/2-pound unit, which is priced at \$1,200. (For additional info, circle 154 on Reader Service Card.)

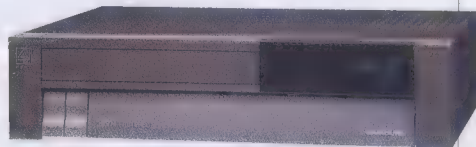
▼ GROUND-BREAKING JVC LENS SYSTEM

An innovative MF (multifunction) lens highlights JVC's new GR-SZ1 S-VHS-C camcorder (\$2,000). An adjustable, removable front lens is the key to multiple configurations. By adjusting or removing it, the lens can shift from an 8x to an 11x zoom, into an ultra-wide-angle mode or (aided by a lens extender) into a thoroughly unique microscope mode. Combining the microscope mode and the 2x digital zoom with a 35-inch TV display can result in 344x magnification. A multibrand remote control lets users randomly assemble edit up to eight scenes. (For additional info, circle 155 on Reader Service Card.)



▲ LIGHTWEIGHT CONTENDER FROM HITACHI

Hitachi's VM-H39A Hi8 camcorder (\$1,700) claims to be the world's smallest (3-1/4 x 4 x 9-1/2 inches) and lightest (1.3 pounds) camcorder. But that's not all. It also includes unique features like a sepia effect that gives video the look of old photographs, a "sunset enhancement" effect that heightens colors, and a monochrome effect for the black-and-white film noir look. The VM-H39A even has 16:9 aspect ratio recording capability, but to play it back without compressing the image you'll need a 16:9 TV set, which is not yet available in the U.S. The camcorder's other features include a color viewfinder, hi-fi stereo audio, 64x digital zoom, electronic image stabilization and remote control. (For additional info, circle 151 on Reader Service Card.)

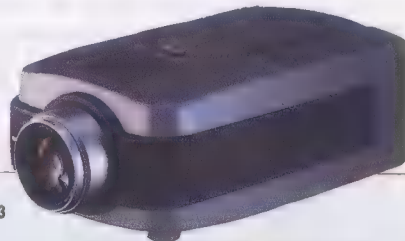


▲ REINVENTING THE VCR

Samsung directed an American design firm to "reinvent the form" for its new line of VCRs. The result is the VR8802 VHS VCR (\$580), a four-head hi-fi model that also includes index search, remote on-screen programming and one-year/eight-event programming. The four-head design permits still, frame advance and variable slow motion. (For additional info, circle 153 on Reader Service Card.)

▼ PORTABLE THEATER

Sharp has done it again, adding another innovative model to its line of LCD projectors. The XV-P10U (\$2,795) weighs in at just nine pounds and includes audio, thanks to a three-inch full range speaker. The projector produces 350 lines of resolution in images that can range from 30 to 60 inches. The jack panel accommodates three video sources, including one S-video input. (For additional info, circle 152 on Reader Service Card.)



VIDEO SHOWCASE

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For product information and the dealer nearest you, contact: Harman Video, 8380 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91325. Telephone: (818) 893-9992.

CIRCLE SHOWCASE #1

Chaparral Monterey Satellite Receivers

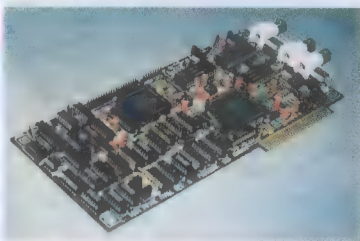
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The Monterey satellite receiver's unique four-way audio/video switcher lets you easily select from a host of satellite TV options or as many as three other audio/video alternatives — and from any room in the house. Your VCR, camcorder or CD player can be on-line and entertainment-ready at all times. And with the receiver's digital color P-I-P functions, you can toggle on-screen between any two of these inputs at once. What's more, several Monterey models offer the best in satellite sound in digital or analog stereo, and with Dolby surround sound and dynamic noise reduction. The Monterey is the essential control center to the ultimate home entertainment experience.

For more information and location of the Chaparral dealer nearest you, call: (408) 435-1530

CIRCLE SHOWCASE #2



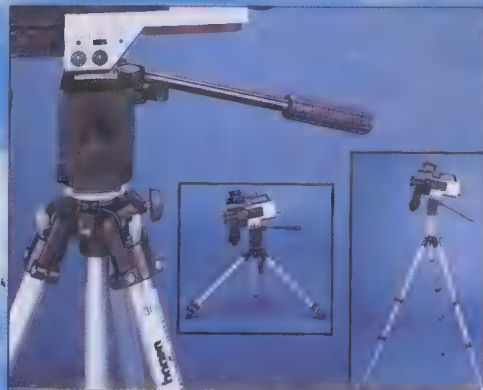
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For the full story on the only plug-in board made in the USA, and to take advantage of the special introductory price of \$1050, contact Prime Image at 19943 Via Escuela, Saratoga, CA 95070; Tel: (408) 867-6519 Ext. 5; Fax: (408) 926-7294.

CIRCLE SHOWCASE #3



BOGEN 3169 CINE/VIDEO TRIPOD

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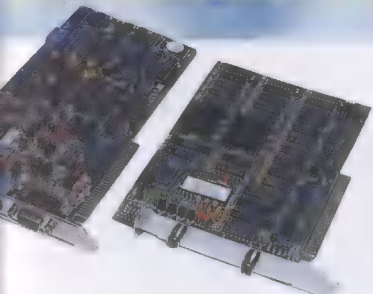
Easy to use and easy to handle, the 3169 combines Bogen 3001 Tripod Legs

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See your dealer or write to Bogen Photo Corp., 565 East Crescent Avenue, Ramsey, N.J. 07446-0506; (201) 818-9500

CIRCLE SHOWCASE #4

FALL PREVIEW



THE VIDEO LINX ANSWER

The solution for all of your IBM desktop video challenges

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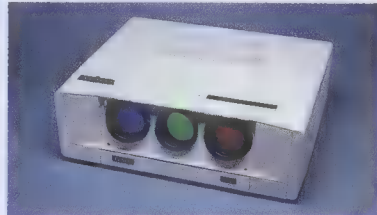
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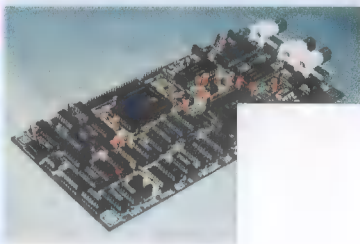
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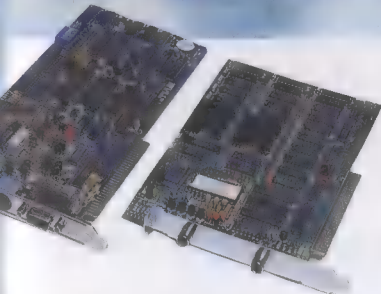
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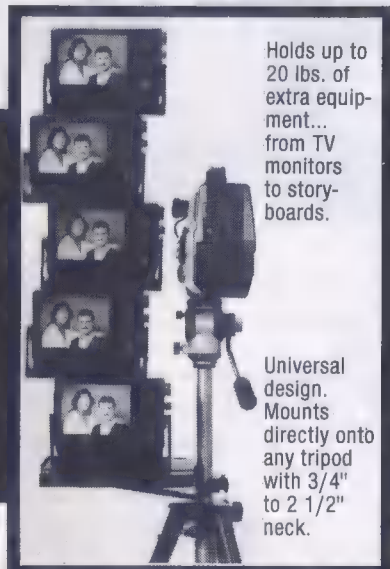
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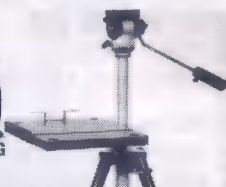
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HANDS ON TEST

BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH
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THIEL SPEAKERS

*Audiophile speakers
for videophiles*

Are high-end audio and home theater sound mutually exclusive? This question has come up repeatedly as we've listened to speaker systems and electronic components that do a great job of reproducing musical performances or movie soundtracks, but seldom—if ever—both. Unfortunately, most of us can't afford the cost or the space required for two separate, dedicated systems. So we decided to assemble a first-rate home theater sound system with speakers originally intended for use in traditional two-channel audio, in the hope of bridging the gulf between these two worlds.

Thiel speakers, recognized as among the best in high-end audio, served as the centerpiece of our experiment. We used a pair of CS 2.2 three-way tower speakers (\$2,250/pair) and five SCS bookshelf speakers (\$1,090/pair). In a unique design, the SCS's tweeter is mounted behind the woofer and fires through its center. The result is proper time alignment for the two drivers as well as an extremely small face compared to other full-range, audiophile speakers. The SCS virtually disappears when placed on a living room bookshelf.

All Thiel speakers are known for their great "imaging" capabilities. Imaging is the psychoacoustic illusion of instruments placed at specific points across a three-dimensional soundstage. The term also encompasses a speaker's ability to accurately reproduce the varying tonal qualities of different instruments and voices. Thiel speakers are not cheap, but their advantages—especially when compared to most mass-market speakers—are not difficult to discern. They're good enough to rekindle your love for music—not just your interest in equipment.

But would these qualities serve as well in a home theater environment? We got a quick answer soon after we unpacked the CS 2.2s. We were so anxious to hear them, we set them up in a simple two-channel system with a tiny Fuji P-40U LCD projector as a monitor. A few minutes into *Dick Tracy*, we were startled to hear what sounded like distinct rear-speaker effects!

Apparently, the CS 2.2's strong imaging allows them to create the illusion

of rear speakers. It's not as dramatic as a Dolby Pro-Logic system, but it's a lot easier to achieve. Best of all, the Thiels' detail brought out the subtleties of movie soundtracks. Voices and music sounded much more natural and realistic than with speakers designed for home theater use. And there's no need for a sub-woofer.

We were especially pleased once we set up a complete high-end system, which included a Lexicon CP-3 surround decoder, NAD 2400 THX amps and the Theta Data laserdisc transport with Theta's DS Pro Basic II digital-to-analog converter. We were surprised by how good a two-channel audio-for-video system can sound with the right equipment.

The CS 2.2s also work well with rear speakers and a surround decoder set for phantom center, but only if one or two people are watching from a spot equidistant from the speakers. Otherwise, sounds in front tend to pull to one side.

Twin Towers:

Thiel's CS 2.2 speakers image so well they can produce surround effects without a decoder or extra speakers.





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We tried using an SCS as a center speaker to solve this problem, with good results, although the timbre variations between the SCS and the CS 2.2s proved somewhat distracting.

Those new to high-end audio should beware—if the rest of your gear isn't up to snuff, the CS 2.2s will let you know about it. We don't recommend using them with inexpensive A/V receivers, surround-sound decoders, amplifiers or CD/LD players—stick to top-of-the-line electronics. Also, the CS 2.2s must be positioned at least a couple of feet away from walls, and they're tall enough to intrude on front-projection images.

We also tried using five SCS speakers together in a standard Dolby Pro-Logic setup, and were thrilled with the results. Three timbre-matched speakers across the front always provide a foundation for good home theater sound, and three Thiels are even better. Despite their size, the SCS's reproduce sounds as low as 64 Hertz—easily enough bass for action-movie wallop. We felt that using SCS's in the rear was unnecessary—much less expensive speakers will do just fine for ambient effects. Of course, the main advantage to using Thiels for video is that the speak-

ers are always available to perform their usual two-channel magic for music.

In the end, we were extremely pleased by the results of our experiment. We confirmed our primary suspicion: Good speakers—even those not really intended for home theaters—can be made to sound great for use with video. The reverse, however, seldom holds true: Many preassembled home theater speaker systems leave a lot to be desired when it comes to music. So consider assembling your home theater from scratch, and do some serious listening on your own. With a little extra care, you may be able to take care of all your audio/video needs with one system. ■

8MM CAMCORDER

continued from page 30

others, and the fade button is both the largest and covered with easy-to-feel bumps. One elongated button has two functions: white balance lock and gain up. Quick, short presses of this button turn the lock mode on and off; long presses turn the gain-up mode on and off.

A line in/out switch controls the function of the audio and video jacks,

making recording from other video sources possible, so you can make 8mm copies of VHS tapes and use the E210 as a travel VCR. Ease of use is very good.

Picture quality is good, comparable to that of most low-priced 8mm camcorders. Its hi-fi mono audio offers only average performance, but it's a lot better than the linear track audio found on most inexpensive VHS and VHS-C camcorders. Overall, we rate it good. The E210 is not for advanced users, but should work well for those who are interested simply in getting some good shots of the family vacation. ■



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San Geronimo, California

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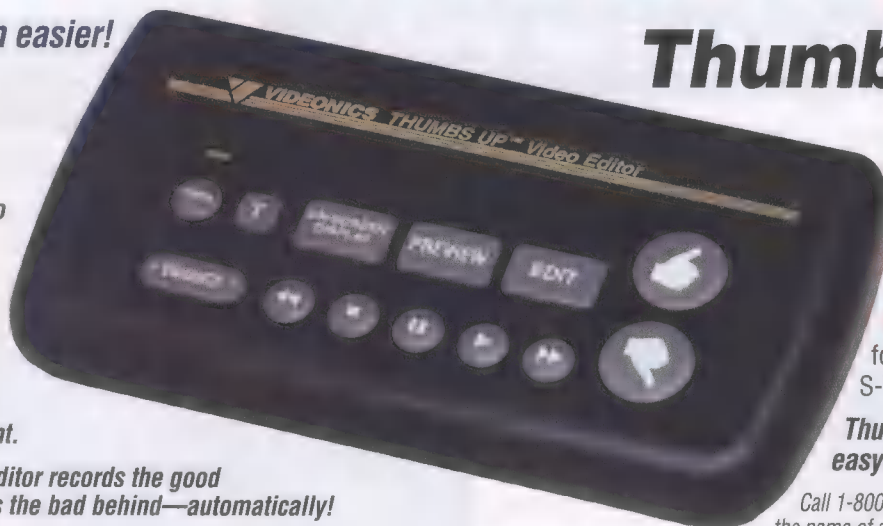
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BY LAWRENCE B. JOHNSON

A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

6 VCRs, 6 styles—
our hands-on, gloves-off
guide to selecting
the ideal deck.

The VCR has come a long way. Patched now into at least one TV set in 80 percent of all American homes, it's used for more entertainment tasks than even its inventors envisioned. We use it to watch movies—rented, purchased or borrowed—to exercise with, to learn, to share memories with friends, to record TV programs, to copy our own tapes or dub camcorder footage, and, finally, to edit our own home videos.

Of course, a few VCR owners still have trouble getting past the flashing clock display. But there's no longer any excuse. The video industry has awakened to real consumer needs and brought forth a generation of versatile, high-performance VCRs that are disarmingly easy to use and master. One-touch recording, onscreen instructions, program clocks as simple to set as a bedside alarm, and sophisticated editing features activated by a couple of logically arranged buttons make the new VCRs heady fun, ■ rocket ride. Only you don't have to be ■ rocket scientist to get off the ground.

When it comes to user-friendliness and sheer playability, today's sophisticated VCRs are in a league of their own compared to models even a few years old. To gain some perspective and to help you decide which type best suits your needs, we gathered a six-pack of top VCRs—from JVC, Mitsubishi, Panasonic, RCA, Sony and Toshiba—and put them through their paces. While a couple of these machines were created to do it all, and are consequently the most costly, most emphasize one or another aspect of VCR technology.

However, they all share one feature, the fundamental requirement for admission to the high-end VCR camp: hi-fi sound. How significant is this? Think of it as virtual reality. I've recorded com-

pact discs directly onto videotape using hi-fi decks and the results are outstanding. It's the next best thing to a digital medium.

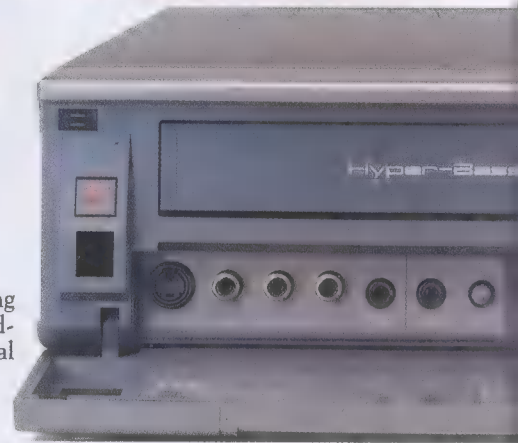
Two of our decks, which vary in price from \$550 to \$1,000, are S-VHS models. Although S-VHS rivals the quality of laserdiscs, even its champions concede it has yet to persuade more than a small number of VCR buyers to give it a try; its representation among our machines reflects this reality. Three of our VCRs—by Panasonic, RCA and Toshiba—embody the recent trend of shifting the tape slot to the center of the deck. The contention is that ■ precisely centered tape transport minimizes system vibration. However, I found nothing, visual or aural, to be gained or lost by center positioning.

Before describing what we found, it's worth noting a few givens. First, all six machines are hi-fi, they all use four heads, and the more ambitious editing models provide ■ flying erase head. All offer remote controls and, without exception, the designs for the remotes reflect the same practical rethinking that

distinguishes the VCRs. Finally, almost as an emblem of the camcorder's growing significance, all six decks present audio/video jacks on their front panels, a simple improvement that can help both camcorders and VCRs become more creative tools than many a videophile ever dreamed might be possible.

JVC HR-S6800U

This Olympian machine harbors ■ Dream Team of performance features. Not surprisingly, at \$1,000, it also stands at the pricing summit of the six VCRs under consideration. The real surprise is how readily the HR-S6800U can turn you into an all-star videographer. Whether you want to edit camcorder footage or simply make a dazzling copy of a laserdisc, JVC's S-VHS deck lets you accomplish the task deftly, cleanly





Dream Team:

RCA's VR-667HF lets users with cable TV program multichannel recording sequences, while Sony's SLV-696HF includes both video and audio editing tools. JVC's S-VHS HR-S6800U (left) features unusually simple controls for assemble edits.

and—above all—easily.

Creator of both the VHS and S-VHS formats, JVC has kept a firm place on the cutting edge of home video editing technology. While the company has produced some formidable editing machines, the 6800 is the slickest yet. It redefines user-friendliness by making child's play of random-assemble editing—the technique every weekend sharpshooter would like to have at his or her disposal, but which many find too complicated. Not any more. In three baby-simple steps, at the touch of three buttons, the 6800 lets you mark off eight scenes and reassemble them into a video that someone besides your mother might actually enjoy.

The 6800 offers other nice touches for easy and effective use. An index search mode lets you speed through a

tape to starting points you've "marked" electronically. A blank search function fast-forwards to the end of the recorded portion of a tape, then stops, which is a blessing when you go back to a cassette that's partially recorded. A picture-quality adjustment allows you to sharpen or soften the image of a prerecorded tape, which can make for better dubbing and more tolerable viewing of rentals. On the shadowed side, JVC overhypes its "Hyper-Bass," a self-descriptive warping of the machine's intrinsically superb hi-fi sound. Assuming you're piping the audio through your stereo system, our advice is to leave Hyper-Bass unused.

MITSUBISHI HS-U67

This \$999 S-VHS deck is like a Stealth bomber anyone can fly. Just hop into the cockpit (meaning your favorite

chair), grab the stick (read: remote control) and—whoosh! Everything you need to know about takeoff, maneuvering and landing appears on your TV screen in plain language. Just in case you haven't gone to flying school, Mitsubishi calls its exemplary guidance system ViewPoint. No matter what your mission or altitude, it lets you see all, and clearly.

Making a recording involves only one touch of the remote. To program the VCR, simply hit the Quick Program button and follow the onscreen instructions. To set the clock, just watch the screen and go with the flow. The only question you're left pondering is why it's taken the video industry so long to make the basic stuff so simple.

The HS-U67 also takes the angst out of a lot of performance features. Sys-

LEAGUE

tems collectively tagged Intelligent Picture combine digital audio and video tracking, EP noise reduction and color monitoring to deliver an optimum image from any tape. Onscreen instructions clarify editing, too.

And the Mitsubishi can operate at Stealth-like speed, rewinding a two-hour tape in slightly more than one minute and performing visual scans at 30 times normal speed. Getting around on the tape is made convenient in several ways. In one search mode, the VCR advances 30 seconds at each push of a button. Hit it four times and you've leaped over a TV station break and a slew of commercials. In Skip Search mode, a tape is fast-forwarded to your preset index points where it is sampled at normal speed, then automatically fast-forwarded again.

Like the JVC deck, the Mitsubishi presents an elegant front panel that shows little but a display field. Swing the panel down and the full array of controls—including A/V inputs—lies at your fingertips. It's a classy touch for a classy performer.

PANASONIC PV-4264

Did I mention user-friendly? Programming a VCR to record tomorrow at noon or every Monday at 9 p.m.—pay attention, fellow National Football



Main Remote

League addicts—does not get any easier than Panasonic makes it with the PV-4264, and a little toy thrown in with the deck called the Program Director.

The Program Director looks like most other remote controls, except that it offers a column of six program dials opposite a parallel series of LCD displays. Rotate the dials to set the desired recording date, start times, stop times and the



Tweaked-Out Toshiba: The SVF-990 boasts an incredible number of digital video effects.

In The Batter's Box

Chances are, one of the decks described in the accompanying article will be the VCR you've always dreamed of. But maybe you're looking for something a little unusual, like fancy digital effects, a timebase corrector or easy interfacing with an editing controller. Breathe easy—whatever you want, you can probably find, because variety is a fact of video life. There are plenty more hot consumer decks worth a look. Here are a few we've come to love. Depending on your needs, one may be perfect for you. Some—like Toshiba's SVF-990—have been on the market for years, but still match newer decks in performance and features. No matter what capabilities you seek, you're sure to find them in one of these super decks.

● **Sony EV-S3000.** When it was introduced last spring, this \$1,900 Hi8 deck instantly became one of our favorites. A full-field timebase corrector (not one of the inexpensive ones that only work on a few lines at once) corrects for picture jitter caused by the inherent instability of the tape transport. The picture is gorgeous, and the still frame is perfectly clear, without the jitter and smearing that mars the stills produced by most digital decks.

Its LANC jack makes it compatible with many editing controllers, and allows it to be computer-controlled through Sony's Vbox interface. Stereo PCM digital audio tracks facilitate high-quality audio dubbing. But no deck is perfect: We wish Sony had given the EV-S3000 the same highly accurate RC time code used on the CCD-V801 camcorder. And if Sony could figure out a way to put video dub—one of the most useful editing features—into a Hi8 deck, it might have the perfect VCR.

● **Toshiba SVF-990.** Still the most tricked-out VCR in history, the S-VHS SVF-990 uses a gigantic remote control crowded with buttons for its numerous digital effects. Besides the usual strobe, paint and mosaic, it has solid-color wipes, fades, a ver-

continued on page 46

channel, then point and hit Transmit. You'll get your recording. The deck also has a conventional remote.

The PV-4264, priced at \$699, is intriguing too for other reasons. It belongs to an emerging class of VCRs called "quasi-Super-VHS," meaning you can play back S-VHS tapes but you can't record in the Super format. This lets you play S-VHS tapes you may come across or have from using either a S-VHS or S-VHS-C camcorder. However, the S-VHS tape you pop into Panasonic's deck plays only at standard VHS resolution. Is this a technology we're all clam-

oring for? I don't think so, but the feature costs little to add and makes the deck more versatile.

Even without it, the PV-4264 would be a serious and attractive deck. It boasts the digital picture correction found in more expensive models, as well as video and audio dubbing, adjustable slow motion, and a frame-by-frame advance that can be controlled at both the front panel and the remote control. Other high points on a long list of fea-





Designated Hitters: Toshiba's M-658 shifts from SP to EP to record unexpectedly long programs, while Mitsubishi's S-VHS U67 can rewind a two-hour tape in a minute.

tures include "Book Mark Search" (which permits easy location of preset segment starting points), a locking device that prevents little fingers from probing into the cassette chamber, and an array of multispeed playback operations like field-frame advance and rapid search.

As for the Panasonic's standard VHS image, it's as vivid as any you'll find.

SONY SLV-696HF

It once may have looked as if Sony lost the war,

fectively designed decks around should come as no shock to anyone. Its claim to fame is a multifunction shuttle dial, offered only on the front panel of an earlier model but now duplicated on the remote control. The VCR's larger appeal, however, lies in the clarity and balance of a design concept that incorporates a purposeful array of features.

While amenities—such as VCR Plus, program indexing and an eight-event/one-month timer—make the SLV-696HF an excellent choice for routine timeshifting (onscreen programming helps, too), a closer look reveals a

range with another VCR or a camcorder.

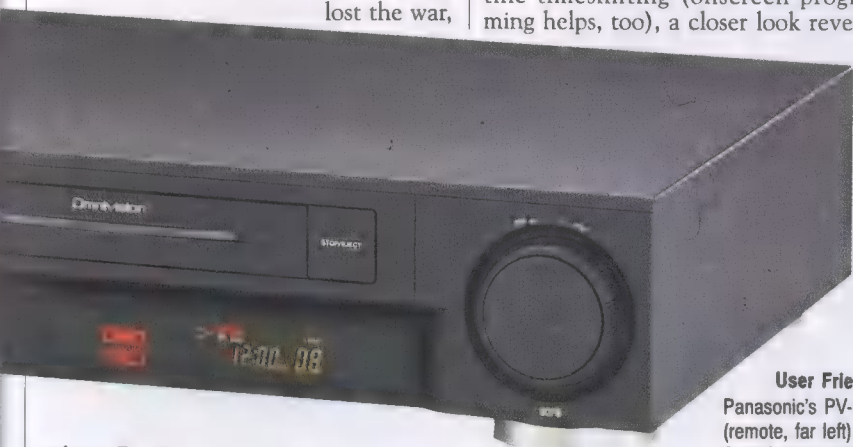
Like other top VCRs, the Sony offers automatic tracking to maintain optimum picture quality, along with an extensive data display on the TV screen. A nice extra twist provides an onscreen "help" message: If you try something you aren't supposed to do, or you simply muff an operation, the VCR not only tells you so on the screen but beeps.

We're dealing with star-caliber VCRs here, but even in this league the Sony delivers a remarkably good picture. It seems to get more out of standard VHS than the nominal limit of 240 lines of resolution might suggest.

TOSHIBA M-658

The M-658 falls into a broad, clear-cut place in the market. Its potential buyer is the person who just wants to enjoy a quiet evening with a rented copy of *The Shining*, or maybe catch-up with supernatural events of the day on TV. This person is not into heavy editing, but may have a very critical eye.

To satisfy the couch potato critic in us all, Toshiba has endowed the M-658, priced at \$630, with some illuminating features. Two slow-motion modes let you gear down to 1/7th or 1/15th speed. For an ever closer look at just how the evil Terminator is able to ooze through iron bars, you can shift into single-frame advance. And after you try this several times and still can't catch the *trompe l'oeil*, still frame will let you freeze any shot. For relocating favorite scenes



User Friendly: Panasonic's PV-4264 (remote, far left) plays S-VHS tapes at VHS levels.

when Beta fell before the onslaught of VHS. But marketing master that Sony is, it simply regrouped and established its own turf in VHS. So here's the latest and best VHS model from Sony at a reasonable \$649 price. That it's also one of the most ef-

fective editing system. Editing tools include insert capability for both audio and video segments. The owner's manual even spells out, step by step, how to use the 696 in a synchronized editing ar-

BUYER BEWARE

Fraudulent phone tricks can cost you money.

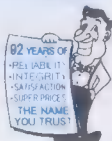
Phone fraud tip-offs.

Beware of phone sales tactics with these characteristics:

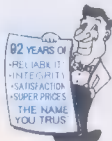
- overemphasizes free merchandise
 - unauthorized dealers
 - pressures you to buy before a deadline
- And remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.*

BUYERS GUIDE

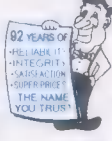
Q. Who can you call and give your credit card number to with confidence?



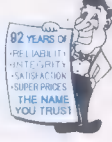
Q. Who is the world's largest camera, electronic and computer department store?



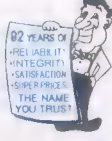
Q. Who has only factory fresh merchandise?
Nothing Refurbished!



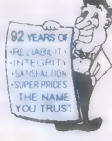
Q. Who has the largest selection of Direct Factory Authorized Brands?



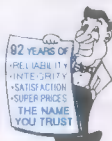
Q. Who can you call for experienced and knowledgeable sales staff?



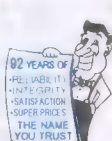
Q. Who guarantees you the lowest purchase price?



Q. Who can you call for prompt and speedy shipment?



Q. Who gives you a 10 day money back guarantee?



Q. They all come and go, but who has been here for 92 years?

ANSWER

TO FIND OUT WHO THIS 92 YEAR OLD RETAIL GIANT IS, TURN TO PAGE 60

quickly, the Toshiba offers Accel Search: Hold down the fast-forward or rewind button and the tape speed increases.

The deck's transport provides a couple of other novelties. If you just can't get enough of the Knicks actually beating the Bulls, switch on Auto Repeat and you can watch the game tape play over and over until it has played 10 times, and Patrick Ewing and Michael Jordan both collapse in the middle of your living room.

In record mode, when you've programmed in the total time, Toshiba covers you in case the game or flick threatens to outlast the tape. If the timing starts to get dicey, the deck downshifts from standard play speed to extended play. One-touch recording makes the machine a breeze to use and VCR Plus removes all chance from programming. Index search lets you quickly locate and sample electronically marked segments, and virtually every function of the deck can be monitored on a TV screen.

RCA VR667HF

For style, performance and actual ease of use, the VR667HF earns a string of 10s. I'll get back to these virtues, all sweetened by a price that's right — \$549 — but first a word about the owner's manual, which scores a 3.

Gray, ponderous and verbose compared to the crystalline guides from Mitsubishi and Panasonic, RCA's manual all but challenges you to perform the simplest operation. And when it comes down to the one feature that really sets this deck apart — its ability to interface with a cable box so you can program multichannel recording sequences — it's virtually a closed book. Under the heading "Cable Box Set Up Function," the manual plunges into a series of charts. To do what, and why? This we are not told. Perhaps it's assumed ■ salesman has explained it.

What a paradox. While the manual reads like it was written by an autistic electrical engineer, the VCR itself radiates grace and human warmth. To relieve the characteristic boxiness of VCRs, the 667 presents a split-level look, with the lower portion — concealing secondary controls behind ■ drop panel — indented from the upper. The slim-lined top section presents the primary controls as well as the tape slot and display field. And the large display is easily readable from across a room.

Setting aside the manual, the 667, which incorporates VCR Plus, presents no more difficulties than any of the other operationally streamlined decks under discussion. It certainly has in its favor a clearly laid out remote and, at the bottom line, fine performance. It

shines at a level that belies its modest price. Among hi-fi VCRs, it's a genuine value.

In the blazing light of the new VCRs, it's hard to grasp why it has taken engineers so long to whisk away the technological clouds. But just how thoroughly the air has been cleared can be read in the typical owner's manual — which is to say, you really can read it. The language is straightforward, the pages uncluttered and the illustrations plentiful. Sophistication without compromised performance. These are the new VCRs, ■ league of heavy hitters. ■

BATTER'S BOX

continued from page 44

satire character generator with extra characters, like hearts and sports symbols, for special events. Its color corrector offers the power of outboard video processors with very little noise. A scanning mouse that plugs into the front of the deck lets you add printed or handwritten titles, logos and other high-contrast images to videos.

All the editing essentials are there, although we wish Toshiba had put a jog/shuttle dial on the deck as well as on the remote.

•**Goldstar GVR-A485.** At \$500, the GVR-A485 may be the least expensive editing deck available. But surprisingly, Goldstar took no shortcuts when designing it. It has all the editing features found on S-VHS decks costing twice as much, including audio dub, video dub, insert edit, a jog/shuttle dial, a flying erase head and ■ character generator with four type sizes. And the picture quality is right up there with the best VHS decks. Casual home videographers who shoot in VHS, VHS-C or 8mm will have a tough time finding a more affordable or effective machine for turning dull tapes into crowd-pleasers.

•**Panasonic AG-1960.** Although the AG-1960's top reads "For Professional Use Only," don't believe it — this S-VHS deck has become a mainstay of serious amateur production. (It's sold as a consumer deck in Japan.) It interfaces with several edit controllers, and a Selectra serial port interface is available for use with computer video editing programs. Unlike those on other consumer VCRs, the shuttle ring isn't spring-loaded, so you can leave the deck in slow-motion or speed play mode without holding a finger on the control. Panasonic only made one mistake on the AG-1960: The hi-fi and linear audio tracks can't be mixed. But several repair shops now offer modifications that rectify the problem.

—Brent Butterworth

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Model Shown
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BY M. FAUST

As the home video revolution enters its second decade, movie buffs are beset by a peculiar problem: There are too many movies on cassette and disc.

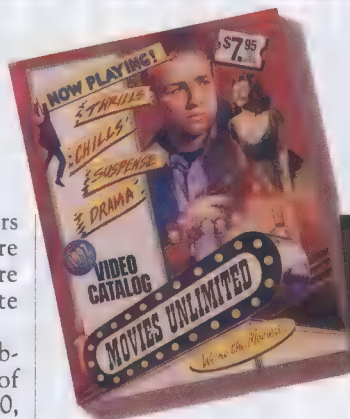
How could this possibly be a problem? Because as the total number of available video titles approaches 50,000, even the largest video superstores can carry no more than a fraction of what's out there. Nor do many care to. It's more profitable to devote maximum shelf space to dozens of copies of the latest Arnold Schwarzenegger or Julia Roberts movie while cutting away older, slower-renting stock. Even if your favorite movie has been released on video, you can no longer count on finding it for rent—especially if it's more than five years old.

With the growth of the dramatically lower priced "sell-through" market, many movie buffs now choose to buy (and rent) hard-to-find videos without ever leaving home. There are tens of thousands of movies (and documentaries, cartoons, TV shows and general weirdness) available on VHS, laserdisc (see sidebar) and even Beta. You just have to know what "800" number to call. What follows is our guide to the best sources for video software by mail.

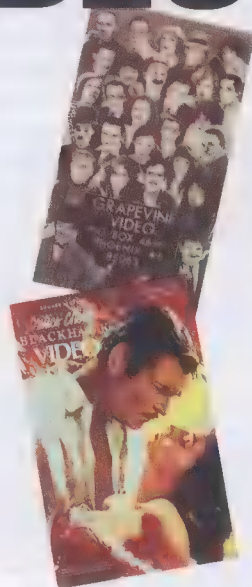
The yearly catalog by **Movies Unlimited** is a browser's delight with almost 700 pages and 25,000 videos grouped by category, plus an alphabetical index. Ninety percent of the videos are kept in stock and can be shipped to you in three or four days; more obscure titles may take longer. The catalog costs \$7.95 plus \$3 handling, which includes quarterly updates and a \$5 credit toward your first purchase. You don't need it to order a tape, though; just call 800-523-0823, and operators will take your credit card order for any available title on VHS or laserdisc.

At 2,200 titles, the free **Critics' Choice** (800-367-7765) catalog is somewhat smaller. But it can get you any movie available on video, laser or 8mm via its video search line (900-370-6500; \$1.95 for the first minute, 95 cents for each additional minute). **Video Connection** (800-365-0449) doesn't have a catalog, but promises it can get any tape currently available at a discount. And for every 12 you buy, you get one free. Shoppers are invited to call and check a price.

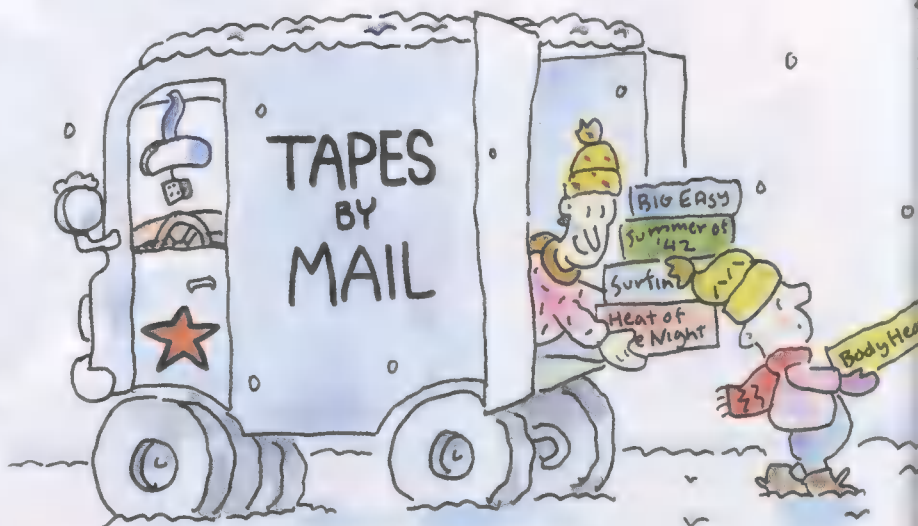
If price is your primary concern, used



VIDEO'S BEST KEPT SECRET



Can't find that title at your neighborhood store? Mail-order video is just a quick phone call away.





videos may be the way to go. **Value Video International** (303-757-4820) and **Jupiter Video** (815-962-1475) both have constantly changing stocks of used VHS tapes, sold in their original boxes and guaranteed to be in satisfactory condition. Average prices range from \$5 to \$20, depending on demand and condition, though Jupiter also has a few hundred sale tapes for less than \$5. If you want to weed out your library, both dealers purchase used tapes for cash or credit. Each also has a selection of new tapes at sell-through prices.

Though none of the services above handle Beta, stalwarts of that format are well-served by several mail-order companies. And while the selection is understandably smaller, bargains abound. **Absolute Beta** (800-WE-R-BETA) stocks 10,000 Beta tapes. A membership fee of \$5 bring you a hefty catalog and regular updates. Used tapes go for \$1 to \$6. New tapes are reasonably priced, but must be ordered in advance of their release to guarantee a copy. **Beta Library** (214-233-4552) carries used tapes for \$19.95, and will buy or swap your used Betas. **Brauer Beta** (800-962-7722) offers many titles for less than \$10; it also sells blank Beta cassettes.

If you're mostly interested in new hits and Hollywood classics, **Columbia House Video Club** (1400 North Fruitridge Avenue, Terre Haute, IN 47812; 800-544-4431) might suit your needs. Like record and book clubs, Columbia House signs you up with a half-dozen or so movies for a nominal cost, then requires you to purchase a similar number

Vidiot's Delight: Laser By Mail

Several mail-order services specializing in laserdiscs offer distinct advantages over traditional methods of purchase, especially when it comes to title selection. The services have deeper inventories than retail stores, and can offer hard-to-find titles for longer periods of time. For example, Warner's discontinued *James Dean 35th Anniversary Collection* boxed set has been scarce in stores since early this year, but some were still available, at presstime, from the **Columbia House Laserdisc Club** (Box 1112, Terre Haute, IN 47811; 800-538-2233).

Mail-order customers can also benefit from generous discounts and pre-order sale prices through companies such as the **LaserDisc Fan Club** (Box 93103, Long Beach, CA 90809-9924; 800-322-2285), **Ken Crane's** (14260 Beach Boulevard, Westminster, CA 92683; 800-624-3078, 800-626-1768 in California), **Sight and Sound** (27 Jones Road, Waltham, MA 02154; 617-894-8633) and **Laser Craze** (33 West Street, Boston, MA 02111; 617-338-9820). Each has a standard discount of 10 percent on most domestic titles, and many times will offer even better deals on new and forthcoming releases. Sight and Sound also buys used laserdiscs, granting credit toward new titles.

Dealers offering used laserdiscs by mail can be a real godsend, especially for those not living in New York or Los Angeles, where there are a number of used-laser retailers. **VDI/A** (5339 Prospect Avenue #221, San Jose, CA 95129; no phone calls), **Video Brokers** (1836 Irving Street NW, Washington, DC 20010-2644; 202-328-0428) and **Triton Video** (247 Bleecker Street, New York, NY 10014; 212-243-3610) deal in used laserdiscs, and solicit lists from potential sellers.

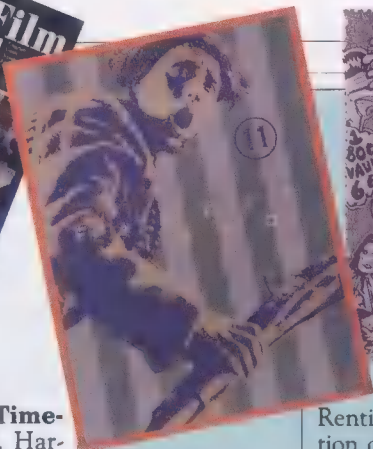
Another advantage to ordering laserdiscs by mail is the level of service one generally receives. Most of these dealers, unlike stores that carry laserdiscs merely as an adjunct to their videocassette business, are specialists—they go the extra mile to find out what's right (or wrong) with new releases, and to let customers know about it.

Other dealers offering discounts or additional bonuses include: **SEM Video Products** (2147 East 17 Street, Brooklyn, NY 11229; 718-645-1663, 800-247-6644), **Tewksbury Audio and Video** (Box 318, Oldwick, NJ 08858; 908-832-9064), **CEBA Video** (Box 44411, Fort Washington, MD 20749; 301-292-6670) and **Laser Video West** (11701 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90025; 310-479-4069).

—Bruce Eder

DAVID GARNER





over the next two or three years. **Time-Life Home Video** (Box 8520, Harrisburg, PA 17105; 800-545-2465) signs you up for a series—like the BBC's *Trials of Life*. You take the episodes you want, return the rest and cancel at any time.

SPECIAL INTERESTS

Those who buy a lot of tapes, or who are interested in genres, might want to go directly to the original sources. There are scores of small distributors devoted to preserving movies generally ignored by the majors. Most feature collections of "public domain" (non-copyrighted) features, including silents, thrillers and horror films from the '30s and '40s, '50s sci-fi, serials, older foreign films, "B" movies, camp classics and vintage television. There are also innumerable collections of movie trailers, usually compiled by category and era. Most of these dealers offer entertaining catalogs, and almost every one has at least a few items you can't find anywhere else.

The companies listed below in alphabetical order are run by film buffs and collectors who sell tapes of movies that are otherwise hard to find. They generally offer clean transfers on high-quality videotape from 16mm or 35mm print sources. When the only copy a service can find of a particularly rare film is substandard, they usually warn you in advance. (Beware, though, of bootleggers who advertise in the pages of fanzines and classified ads: While their prices are often lower, many are selling third-generation video dupes.) The catalogs are free, except as noted.

Blood Times Video (c/o L. Paul, 44 East 5 Street, Brooklyn, NY 11218; 718-972-8082) offers hundreds of extremely rare European and Asian horror, fantasy and action films. Tapes are priced according to image quality and range from \$12 to \$18. Send \$1 for catalog. **Cinemacabre** (Box 10005, Baltimore, MD 21285-0005), an offshoot of the fanzine of the same name, offers many short features you can mix-and-match to make up your own tape. The oddest is a 10-minute sound interview with Arthur Conan Doyle. Tapes start at \$10.

continued on page 58

How To Rent Tapes By Mail

Renting videos by mail may lack the immediate gratification of picking up a movie to suit your mood at a moment's notice, but it provides a chance to see those hard-to-find films without having to shell out much cash. Each of the rental-by-mail companies below offers a catalog and periodic updates or newsletters, and most allow you to keep tapes for three nights from the time you receive them. All require a credit card and have "800" numbers for placing orders.

The broadest selection belongs to **Facets Video** (800-331-6197), which offers more than 12,000 titles, including many it distributes exclusively. The membership fee of \$25 includes two free rentals. Other rentals are \$10 per tape, though several prepaid options can bring the price down.

Even though **Home Film Festival** (800-258-3456) offers a smaller selection (approximately 1,700 titles), it features a surprising number of noteworthy movies that Facets doesn't stock. It also has about 800 titles in Beta. The \$10 membership fee includes one free rental. A three-night rental is \$5 for one tape, \$9 for two, \$13 for three, plus postage; periodic specials rent for as little as \$3.50. And HFF saves you a trip to the post office by providing a prepaid mailer with your order. When you're done with your tapes, simply put them in the mailer and drop it in any mailbox.

Video Library (800-669-7157) boasts an inventory of 12,000 titles, with fewer foreign titles than Facets or HFF but a larger selection of mainstream movies. Catalog is \$7.95, but there is no membership fee, and tapes rent for \$5 plus shipping (which, like HFF, includes a prepaid return mailer).

Evergreen (800-225-7783) specializes in international cinema, and features many out-of-print tapes in its stock of 5,000 titles. There is no membership fee, and rental prices vary based on how many tapes you order and how long you want to keep them. One tape for three days is \$12.50, but if you plan to rent on a regular basis, rates can go as low as \$5. If you're interested in purchasing, Evergreen also take trade-ins for credit.

Video Vault's motto—"The Guaranteed Worst Movies in Town!"—is only half true; aside from its huge collection of "cult" movies, Video Vault's stock of 10,000 VHS tapes also includes an impressive selection of foreign films, musicals, obscure film noir and classic comedies. Three tapes for two days cost \$20; you pay the return postage. Membership is \$15 for one year or \$24.95 for the lifetime option. Call 800-VAULT-66.

Two mail-order companies detailed in the accompanying article also rent their tapes by mail. **Discount Video** will send you any five titles from its catalog for \$35 for two weeks (a \$50 deposit is required). And while **JARS Video Collectibles** rents from its impressive collection of martial arts and action films, the cost (from \$8 to \$50, with most titles in the \$15 to \$20 range) isn't for the casual viewer.

—MF

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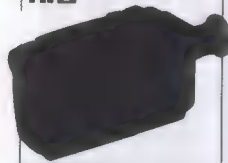
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PANASONIC

- PV 22 \$679
- PV 42 \$879
- PV 62 CALL
- PV 705 CALL
- PV 720 CALL
- PV 750 CALL
- PV 760 CALL
- PV 770 CALL



RICHO

R18 SAME AS SONY
TR 101



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8

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- UCS1
- A1 DIGITAL
- L1 INT CHANGE. LENS



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Hi8

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Over thirty years of quality dependable service.



BY DANIEL KUMIN



BREAKING THE COLOR BARRIER

Why true color accuracy is still home video's biggest bugaboo & what you can do to fix it.

A rose may be a rose in literature, but not necessarily on TV. If you could view a single American Beauty on one of those multiscreen video display walls, you might see pastel-red roses, pink roses, vermillion, magenta and crimson roses. Each reproduced from the same electronic signal, each clearly and colorfully different.

But you would be unlikely to see a deep, full-bodied, pure rose, because the color televisions we have in the U.S. just don't have that color in their quivers. What's worse, today's TV sets, even when meticulously calibrated, do not all provide the same range of color. And even the best fall well short of the visible range our eyes see in nature, or even at the movies.

In this article, we'll explore the reasons why our TV sets don't reproduce color accurately and how, 40 years after the emergence of color TV, new technologies like HDTV and digital video may finally give us the realistic video color we've been waiting for. We'll also

Simply Red?
Despite 40 years of constantly improving color, four color TV sets screening a rose may still display four shades of red.

PHOTOS: MAHDAVIAN

tell you what you can do in the meantime—with the TV set you already own—to get the best possible color from your video system.

American TV's problem with color is the result of several factors. First, the NTSC video system that brings us all our programming—via terrestrial broadcast, cable and satellites, and from videotapes and laserdiscs—is incapable of recording and reproducing the full range, or gamut, of visible colors. More significantly, there is little in the way of effective color standardization in consumer video. Sure, there are strict broadcast and production specifications. But at your end—specifically, on your living-room TV set—you almost surely see reds, greens, blues and combinations of colors markedly different from those that went in at the beginning.

This is especially unfortunate since movies are now viewed as often in the home as at the cinema. Movie-makers—



directors, set designers, and particularly cinematographers and lighting designers—take color very, very seriously. Just think of the importance of color nuance in the films of Martin Scorsese, Jonathan Demme and David Lynch. If movie reproduction for home viewing is to become as serious as that of the cinema, progress is in order.

THE COLOR OF HISTORY

The video color system developed by the National Television Standards Committee in the mid-1950s required engi-



COLOR BARRIER

neering acrobatics to squeeze an acceptable color range into the available broadcast bandwidth—radio-frequency “real estate,” if you will. Some compromises were unavoidable—and they limited slightly the range of color that could be broadcast and reproduced, particularly in the green-to-yellow region, where our eyes are most color-sensitive (leading critics to assert that NTSC stands for Never Twice the Same Color). At the same time, the NTSC color standard accepted far less resolution for color signal components than for black-and-white ones. Fortunately, psycho-visual phenomena make this far less troublesome than you might expect.

The system, though imperfect, could reproduce surprisingly natural color even on the first vacuum-tube color TV sets. There was a catch, however: The original color picture tubes, although their color was accurate, were not very bright. Consequently, when they were displayed in brightly lit stores alongside

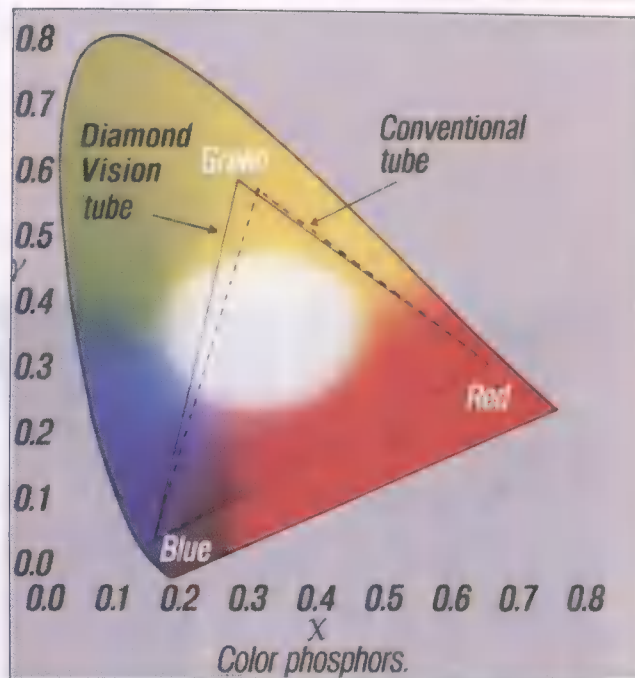


Tune In, Turn On: A *Video Standard* features a tutorial for setting up a video monitor.

battalions of blazingly bright black-and-white sets, they looked dim.

Why were early sets so dim? In all picture tubes, an electron beam sweeps thousands of times per second across a field of electroluminescent chemical deposits on the inside of the tube. The deposits, called phosphors, glow at intensities relative to the power of the beam. In a black-and-white set, there is only one phosphor—white—which since the early days has been capable of high brightness. A color set has three

Color Consultant: CIE chromaticity charts can be used to show differences among TV sets in the way they process color. This chart indicates a Mitsubishi Diamond Vision tube displays stronger reds, greens and blues than other picture tubes.



phosphors—red, green and blue—that in combination are supposed to produce the full NTSC color gamut, as well as black and white.

The original color phosphors, so-called NTSC-red, NTSC-blue and NTSC-green, were fairly pure, and thus produced accurate video colors. But in the ensuing four decades, color accuracy has actually declined, while brightness has increased dramatically.

The rationale was simple economics. Because early color sets were painfully dim by black-and-white standards, they didn't sell well. So manufacturers changed the phosphors from NTSC-standard colors to compositions that, though short of the “official” standards, produced substantially brighter images. As we all know, this worked quite well from a marketing standpoint—color television is now ubiquitous. So before you assail TV set manufacturers for foisting false color upon us, understand that we did it to ourselves by voting with our wallets.

Fortunately, color TV sets have always included a control for chroma phase. Marked “tint” or “hue,” this permits fastidious viewers to adjust the color gamut, compensating (to a degree) by eye for limitations imposed by “non-NTSC” phosphors. However, the chance of any individual getting a close match to production-studio originals is slim.

Over the years, TV-viewing habits have evolved to make brightness ever more important. Where television was at first viewed in more formalized group settings with lamps dimmed and curtains drawn, today it's an appliance

equally likely to be switched on under the morning sun as in the evening shade. And brightness remains a key sales tool, because a brighter screen attracts the buyer's eye in the TV department, much the way a slightly louder hi-fi speaker—even an inferior one—usually sounds better to the casual ear.

Modern direct-view color TV sets are bright enough for daylight viewing and colorful enough to satisfy consumers. They produce very good blues, but comparatively weaker greens and reds, so intense shades such as deep-green grass or (ahem) blood don't reproduce nearly as well as they do on film. Nor are certain interim colors, such as aqua and greenish-yellow, delivered as they are in life, or at the movies.

There are, of course, differences among tubes from one manufacturer to another. One may have a less yellowish green, while another may offer a purer red. As a rule, tubes made in the U.S. frequently err more on the green-to-yellow side than do Japanese and some other Asian-origin products. But remember that the tube inside a TV set often is not made by the name on the outside, and that an American-brand TV set's tube may not have been produced here.

PROJECTION COLOR

Projection TV sets are another kettle of color altogether. In fact, if color accuracy is what you're after, projection TV is the way to go. Most projection sets are meant to be viewed in an at least partially dimmed environment. Consequently, consumers don't hold these sets up to the brightness standards

continued on page 94

If you haven't considered replacing your camcorder with one of Fuji's new models, maybe you should be reading *Antique World Magazine*.



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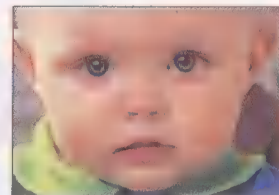
F122SW and F120SW 8mm camcorders.

Both offer a unique combination of features that make other camcorders seem old-fashioned. Such as 12x optical zoom technology that allows for smooth, stepless zooming all the way from super wide angle to telephoto, with perfect clarity at all magnification ratios. And they both have a 1.5 LUX rating that lets you tape in the most difficult low light situations.

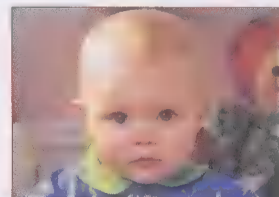
*Fuji's new
Fujix F122SW
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There's also Fuji's Multi-Action Grip that minimizes hand shake and easily converts to a tripod. Not to mention a Fujinon lens, made by the worldwide leader in TV optics. The top of the line Fujix F122SW even has a color LCD viewfinder which allows you to see your subjects just as vividly when recording as when you play it back, particularly when you use Fuji double coated 8mm videocassettes.

To find out where to experience the superiority of these new state-of-the-art camcorders, you'll want to call 1-800-442-FUJI, extension 37. Unless, of course, you're into antiques.



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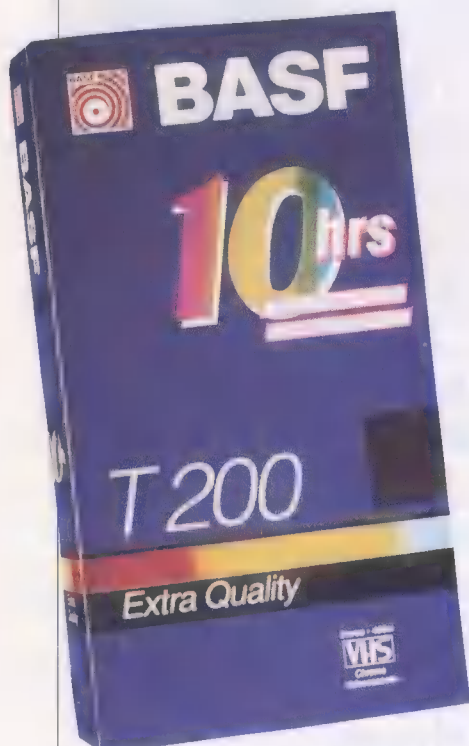
© 1992 Fuji Photo Film U.S.A., Inc.

Circle 62 on Reader Service Card.

BY RODERICK WOODCOCK

EXTRA LONG TAPES— THE REAL SKINNY

New materials launch a space race that's already led to 10-hour tapes. Why bother? Imagine all 3 'Star Wars' on one cassette.



Long Play: BASF's newest delivers 10 hours at EP.

There are two paths to longer video recording times—reduce the tape speed so you use it less quickly, or thin the tape so more can be wound into the same space. In the early days of home video, both approaches were tried. But slowing down the recording speed has tremendous drawbacks. Each slower speed becomes a new subformat, picture and sound quality decrease with tape speed, and the narrower video tracks needed for slow-speed recordings make playback more difficult on other makes and models of VCRs.

These problems have spurred video hardware and tape makers to collaborate on developing thinner tapes, along with “kinder, gentler” tape transports that can handle them with less risk of damage through stretching and tearing.

This hasn't been easy, because videotape is a remarkably thin but often fragile sandwich. It is composed of a polyester base film, an oxide or metal compound that forms the recording layer and a binder that glues everything together. Metal-evaporated Hi8 videotape doesn't use a binder, making it possible to produce even thinner tapes.

Thicker tapes have more stamina than thinner ones, which is why the world's most popular videocassette, the VHS T-120, is filled with tape that's 19 or 20 microns thick. Last year, BASF upped the thin tape ante by introducing a T-180, using a 14.4-micron tape that delivers nine hours of recording time in VHS EP and three hours in SP.

BASF recently exceeded last year's accomplishment by introducing a T-200, packing 13-micron tape into a standard VHS shell to create a 10-hour videocassette. This tape was available in Europe for more than a year, but playability problems in the NTSC format had kept it off the market over here. But apart from the occasional special use, such as the three-hour tape used for the epic-length *Dances With Wolves* (Orion), there seems to be little demand for a super-long VHS tape, since the price per hour at EP is much higher than for heavily discounted T-120s.

Thin tape technology is more important in the VHS-C format. Neither of the existing 14.4- or 13-micron tapes is thin enough to create the long-rumored but yet-to-be-announced 40-minute, TC-40 VHS-C cassette. The TC-30 cassettes introduced two years ago use 14.4-micron tape, but simply packing a VHS-C shell full of 13-micron tape (as I've done experimentally) only manages to deliver about 36 minutes at SP.

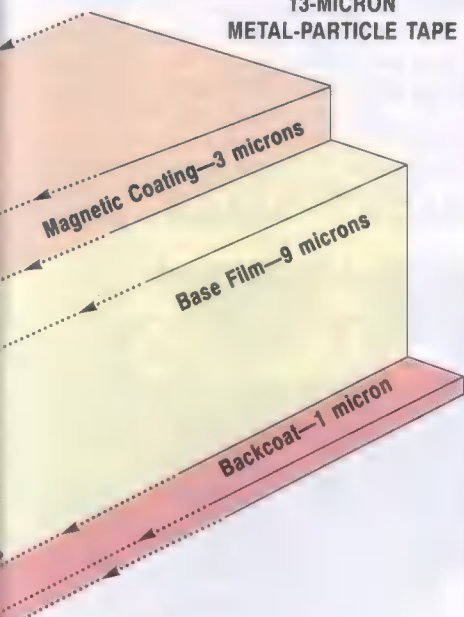
Camcorder users don't really need a 40-minute VHS-C tape—30 minutes at SP is adequate for most shooting. But 40 minutes translates to two hours at EP, which would give VHS-C parity with 8mm, and possibly allow the release of prerecorded movies in VHS-C EP.

Creating a TC-40 would require a tape thickness of about 11 microns. Reports are that JVC and other tape makers aren't far from achieving this goal. In fact, the tape-remaining switches on Panasonic's latest VHS-C Palmcorders have a 40-minute position. The stumbling block isn't making the tape thin enough—it's formulating a base film with sufficient stiffness to perform acceptably in a variety of VCRs.

That breakthrough has apparently been achieved, in the form of a new base film called polyethylene naphthalate, or PEN for short, a new material that combines thinness with stiffness and durability. This material is already being used in 8mm tapes, as well as in the new T-180s sold by Maxell and TDK.

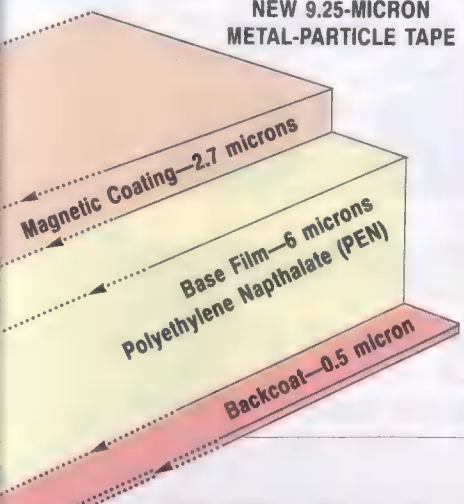
Thin tape has been an almost mandatory requirement of the 8mm format because of its small cassette size. When the format first arrived in stores in late 1984, the longest tape available was 13 microns thick, and delivered only 90 minutes of recording time. A couple of years later, it was joined by the 120-minute P6-120 tape, which is 10 microns thick. Manufacturers slimmed the tape by either paring the thickness of the magnetic coating or by thinning out the base film.

**13-MICRON
METAL-PARTICLE TAPE**



Thin Skinned: Cross-section of 2.5-hour 8mm tape (below) shows how a new polyethylene base film only 6 microns deep makes possible a tape thinner even than BASF's 10-hour VHS tape (above), which shaves several microns off conventional VHS tape.

**NEW 9.25-MICRON
METAL-PARTICLE TAPE**



Denon, Fuji, Sony and TDK have recently managed to break the 10-micron barrier with an 8mm videotape that extends recording time to 2-1/2 hours at SP and five hours at LP. While a P6-120 tape contains 106 meters of videotape, the new P6-150 contains 131.5 meters of 9.25-micron tape, comprising a 6-micron-thick PEN base film, a 2.7-micron-thick magnetic layer and a 0.5-micron-thick backcoating.

Although thinner tapes hold the promise of extended programming, they

aren't without their drawbacks. Super-long VHS tapes like the T-180 are much heavier than T-120s, and the added weight can cause some older (or cheaper) VCRs to labor or stall during rewind. Thinner tapes also may not be compatible with those machines on which the pressure of the pinch roller on the capstan is optimized for standard tapes.

Moreover, since video heads actually dig into the surface of the tape during record and playback, an adjustment pe-

continued on page 74

Shell Shapers:
Molding machines for
VHS cassettes at Ka-
men.



Cassette Confidential

Most people think of videotape technology in terms of the tape itself. But that's only half the story. Tape still has a long way to go after it leaves the factory on huge reels, or "pancakes." We recently got a firsthand look at how VHS cassettes are produced during a tour through 3M's tape plant in Kamen, Germany.

Most of the plant's space is dedicated to the production of the many plastic components of a videocassette, including the two halves of the shell, the tape window, the reels and the door on the front of the cassette. The process starts on a line of 12 computerized injection molding machines, each configured to produce a specific part. Technicians constantly measure the dimensions of these parts to make sure they meet 3M's 0.01-millimeter tolerance.

Belts carry the parts in trays from the molding machines to assembly machines. Metal parts, like springs and screws, are brought in from outside suppliers.

Once the tape shells are assembled, they travel to tape winding machines, which transfer tape from pancakes (produced at other plants in Europe) to the tape shells that go into your VCRs. The winders automatically attach the tape to the clear leaders hanging from the tape reels. Each line of winders can be set to produce any length of tape.

The tape shells run down a belt behind the winders, and each winder grabs a shell whenever it needs one. Technicians keep the winders supplied with pancakes.

After winding, the tapes pass by a computer-controlled labeling machine that combines the functions of a dot-matrix printer and a paint spray gun. It applies Scotch and VHS logos to the back of the tape, and marks the tape length, such as T-120.

From there, the tapes proceed to the boxing and shrink-wrapping room. The boxes are printed elsewhere, but folded in Kamen. Once boxed, the tapes can be wrapped as singles or in packs.

—Brent Butterworth

continued from page 50

Discount Video Tapes (833-A North Hollywood Way, Box 7122, Burbank, CA 91510; 818-843-3366) has many hard-to-find foreign titles, Mexican horror movies, black cinema of the '30s and '40s, and "Video Scrapbooks" (odds and ends featuring Roy Rogers, Judy Garland, Laurel and Hardy, Marilyn Monroe and others). Tapes are priced from \$20 to \$40, and the company also rents by mail (see sidebar). **Foothill** (Box 547, Tujunga, CA 91043; 818-353-8591) has a large selection of serials (\$30 for two tapes) and westerns. It also carries the usual public-domain films for as little as \$8. Its 3,000 titles are available on VHS and Beta. **Grapevine Video** (Box 46161, Phoenix, AZ 85063; 602-245-0210) has many rare silent comedies (features and shorts) and early westerns, on VHS and Beta. Prices range from \$8 to \$25.

Hollywood's Attic (138 Fifth Avenue, Pelham, NY 10803; 800-3-OLD-IES) offers a large selection of vintage westerns, serials and silent films. Tapes are more expensive than average (\$30 for movies, \$70 for serials), but if you buy two you get a third free. Send \$3 for

a catalog and a sample of the monthly newsletter, which features new titles and movie memorabilia sold on consignment. **International Historic Films** (Box 29035, Chicago, IL 60629; 312-927-2900) specializes in historical documentaries, with an enormous amount of material on WWII (including Eva Braun's home movies of Der Fuehrer!), German propaganda films and numerous foreign films unavailable elsewhere, on VHS and Beta. The price range is \$20 to \$50.

Loonic Video (2022 Taraval Street, #6427, San Francisco, CA 94116; 510-526-5681; \$1 for catalog, refundable with purchase) has a small but unique selection of '30s and '40s cartoons, comedy and musical shorts, trailers and Army/Navy Screen Magazines. All tapes are \$16. **JARS Video Collectibles** (Box 113, Little Neck, NY 11363; 718-456-0663) catalog costs \$4, and features a stupendous assortment of Asian movies, martial arts, Japanimation and spaghetti westerns, though prices may be too high for any but the most avid fans. The same is true of its rent-by-mail service (see sidebar).

Mike LeBell's Video (75 Fremont

Place, Los Angeles, CA 90005; 213-938-3333) has a large selection of public-domain titles including some very hard to find, from \$20 to \$50. **Moviecrafft** (Box 438, Orland Park, IL 60462; 708-460-9082) boasts a peculiar collection of rare television shows, cartoons, war newsreels, and railroad and auto show documentaries. Most tapes are \$20 to \$25. **Shokus** (Box 8434, Van Nuys, CA 91409; 800-325-0788, 818-704-0400 in California) offers nothing but classic, and some not-so-classic, TV shows from the '40s to the '60s, mostly with original commercials, on VHS and Beta. Tapes are \$20 to \$25, and the catalog is \$3.

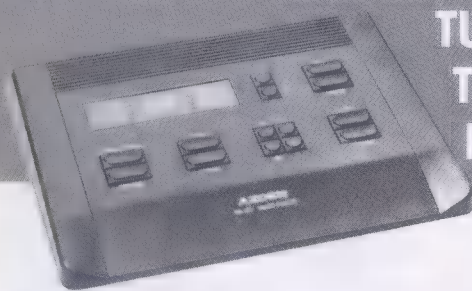
Sinister Cinema (Box 4369, Medford, OR 97501-0168; 503-773-6860) is, if not the first, certainly the biggest and the best of the little distributors who set out to rescue lost movies. This is the place to start looking: Owner Greg Luce offers the best possible copies of nearly 1,000 worthy obscurities. If he sells a substandard copy of a movie, it's a good bet a better one can't be found. Most tapes (VHS and Beta) are \$16.95.

Something Weird (Box 33664, continued on page 74

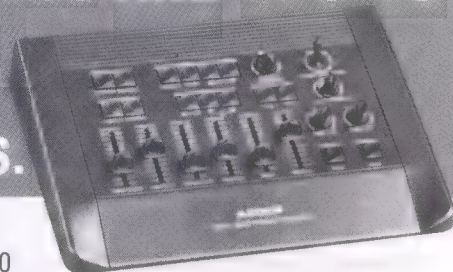
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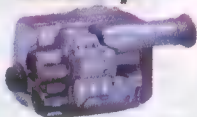
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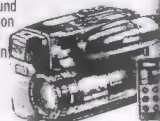
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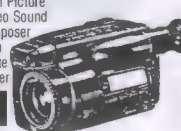
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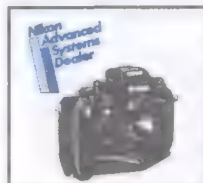
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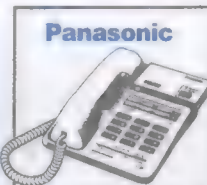
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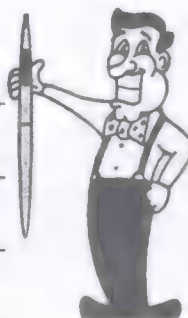
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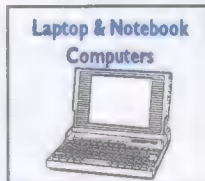


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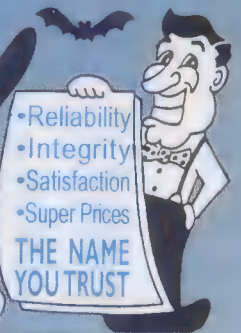
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TAPES & DISCS

N E W R E L E A S E S



Hello, Young Lovers: Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury fight racism in *Mississippi Masala*.

FEATURE FILMS

Mississippi Masala

1992. Denzel Washington, Sarita Choudhury; dir. Mira Nair. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 118 min. priced for rental. Columbia TriStar.

Anyone who ever brought the wrong boyfriend or girlfriend home to meet the folks will relate to *Mississippi Masala*, a tart look at clashing cultures. Set in sleepy Greenwood, Mississippi, this often hilarious tale chronicles the romance of Demetrius (Denzel Washington), an African-American who runs a carpet-cleaning operation, and Mina (Sarita Choudhury), the restless daughter of Indian emigres. Worlds collide with a bang when their secret relationship goes public: Mina's horrified parents practically lock her away, and Demetrius

sees his struggling business dry up, while friends and relatives feel betrayed. "Stick to your own kind" is the implicitly racist philosophy on both sides.

Although the plot holds few surprises, other pleasures abound. Rich in detail, the film sketches affectionate portraits of the two closed societies, spoofing their absurdities without descending to cheap shots. Along with the attractive leads, director Mira Nair boasts a standout supporting cast, including Tico Wells as Demetrius' jive-talking younger brother Dexter, and Roshan Seth as Mina's troubled father Jay, still bitter over the family's expulsion from Uganda by Idi Amin nearly two decades before. His quest for peace of mind provides a backdrop for the young lovers, producing a final image of reconciliation that gives *Mississippi Masala* its moving resonance.

—Jon Young

The Playboys

1992. Robin Wright, Aidan Quinn; dir. Gillies Mackinnon. Hi-fi surround. (PG-13) 113 min. \$92.99. LD \$29.98. HBO.

Though it's set in 1957 Ireland, *The Playboys* features a heroine with a very '90s attitude. Seamstress Tara Maguire (Robin Wright) is a single mother who refuses to divulge the identity of her baby's father despite the ceaseless disapproval of her small-town neighbors. She turns away their demands of "Whose baby is 'e?" with a curt " 'E's mine."

It isn't that she lacks for suitors. Most persistent is Sgt. Hegarty (Albert Finney), a policeman sent down from Dublin as punishment for his drinking. Hegarty sees Tara as his one chance at salvation. "Marry me or I'll go mad," he begs her. "If I marry you, I'll go mad," she answers. Her fancy has been captured by Tom Casey (Aidan Quinn), a traveling actor passing through town. But Hegarty's obsession runs deep, and if he can't have Tara, no one will.

The Playboys is a charming but slight romance whose length may test all but the staunchest Eireophiles. See it, though, for Finney, a powerful actor working at the peak of his abilities. He builds sympathy for this self-loathing man driven to desperate measures by a situation he can neither change nor accept. It's a subtly excellent performance that deserves a better setting.

—M. Faust

Emerald Isle Romance: Single mother Robin Wright falls for Aidan Quinn in *The Playboys*.





Strangers in Good Company

1991. Alice Diabo, Catherine Roche; dir. Cynthia Scott. Hi-fi surround. (PG) 101 min. \$94.95. Touchstone.

Strangers in Good Company is a little Canadian film of considerable charm. A bus carrying a group of seniors home from a picnic breaks down while on an unscheduled side trip, stranding the ladies in the middle of nowhere. For several days they scrounge around, trying to get by while figuring out how to get away. In the meantime they get to know each other more intimately than they might have otherwise.

After a time it becomes obvious that the plot device is really a ploy to get us to listen to these women talk about themselves. It works. The travails of our heroines, as they try to catch frogs for dinner or send smoke signals, are depicted in a nicely understated manner. And they neatly break up the dialog scenes, which are shot in documentary style. These women may actually be talking about their own lives (they call each other by their real first names); they are fresh voices in any event. Touchstone has given the movie a fine presentation, with a lovely image and first-rate sound. —Sol Louis Siegel

White Sands

1992. Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Mickey Rourke; dir. Roger Donaldson. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 101 min. \$94.99. LD \$29.98. Warner.

White Sands resembles life in exactly one way: It's one damned thing after another. A New Mexico deputy sheriff (Willem Dafoe), confronted with a corpse carrying a half-million in cash, decides to crack the case alone. He quickly finds himself into something far over his head with a deadly-but-affable arms dealer (Mickey Rourke, of course), an heiress with a taste for danger (Mary

Roughing It:
A bus breakdown leaves *Strangers in Good Company* fishing for their dinner—and exchanging confidences with their fellow passengers.

Elizabeth Mastrantonio) and a secretive FBI agent (Samuel L. Jackson). To say that this flick has plot twists would imply that there is a plot; what the picture actually does is careen from one convolution to the next. Director Roger Donaldson steers us through it with glee, the players seem to be enjoying themselves and the scenery is gorgeous. You might want to wait for the disc, though: This movie badly needs both letterboxing and sharper color contrast than the tape can manage. —SLS



Desert Deputy: Even with a gun, *White Sands'* lawman Willem Dafoe finds himself in too deep.

The Double Life of Veronique

1991. Irene Jacob, Phillipe Volter; dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (R) 136 min. priced for rental. Paramount.

In Poland, 22-year-old Veronika experiences an unseen presence. Her French counterpart Veronique, born on the same day, subsequently experiences strange visions of Veronika's life and

EDITOR'S CHOICE

kenneth korman

It must have been tough for MTV comedienne Julie Brown to co-write, produce and star in **Medusa: Dare to Be Truthful** (Columbia TriStar), a hilarious send-up of megastar Madonna's theatrical release of last year, *Truth or Dare*. After all, Madonna and her phony rockumentary are perhaps too obvious a target: *Truth or Dare* is likely the most cynical and self-serving slice of public relations ever dished out to the public as *cinema verite*.

But Brown manages to parody an icon already mired in self-parody. "How's it going, Philippines?" cries Medusa at her opening concert. "Buenos noches!" She spends the rest of the tour keeping her immediate family out of the backstage area, dissing her fellow celebrities and mugging for the "hidden" camera. She sums up her concerns in a preshow prayer: "God, give my dancers the courage to accept a pay cut and the wisdom not to go to a lawyer about it." It's not *This Is Spinal Tap*, but it's close. So try renting *Madonna* and *Medusa* as a double feature, and watch them in that order. Just don't expect one film's "reality" and the other's make-believe to be too easily distinguished.



Paramount Home Video is doing its part in the fight against AIDS with the release of **Time Out: The Truth About HIV, AIDS and You**, an entertaining and informative tape aimed squarely at adolescents and preteens. Hosted by Arsenio Hall and Magic Johnson, and featuring MTV-style music and graphics, *Time Out* is meant to reach kids where they live with straight talk about this frightening epidemic. Paramount is making it available to stores for a small fee so it can be offered as a free rental. So if you have kids, be sure to pick it up, and if your store doesn't have it as of September 10, request it. AIDS is everyone's problem, and kids are most in need of education. ■

death, although the two have never met. You are about to enter an uncanny world of light and shadow, of coincidence and parallel. No, it's not Rod Serling calling from *The Twilight Zone*, but *The Double Life of Veronique*, ■ somber, eerie tale with all the substance of ■ heavy fog.

Starring lovely Irene Jacob in both roles, this unassuming drama doesn't strain for effect, unfolding its twin stories in a low-key manner. While visiting an aunt in Krakow, Veronika wins a job singing with a classical-music troupe; alas, she collapses and dies at her first performance. At the same time, Veronique feels the urge to grieve without knowing why, going on to give up her own singing career; eventually, she discovers the image of Veronika in a picture she took on a trip to Poland. Director and co-writer Krzysztof Kieslowski crafts a haunting atmosphere, preferring mood to meaning, emphasizing his charismatic leading lady over the plot. If it doesn't add up to much, *Veronique* casts a hypnotic spell all the same. —JY



Highway 61

1992. Valerie Buhagiar, Don McKellar; dir. Bruce McDonald. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 99 min. priced for rental. Paramount.

Perhaps because they inhabit a country that spreads relatively few people over ■ vast terrain, Canadian filmmakers have always shown an affinity for "road" movies. *Highway 61*, the latest though hardly the best such example, similarly spreads a sparse helping of bizarre characters and dark humor across a wide, aimless film.



It Ain't the Road to Morocco: *Highway 61* is paved with outlandish people and black comedy.

This journey begins in the small Canadian town of Pickeral Falls when barber Pokey Jones (Don McKellar, who also wrote the screenplay) discovers a frozen body in his backyard. That discovery is followed by the arrival of ex-roadie Jackie Bangs (Valerie Buhagiar), the kind of woman whose middle name is obviously Trouble. She identifies the body as that of her brother, and enlists Pokey to drive her and the corpse cross-country to New Orleans for burial.

Their route down Highway 61 takes them through a catalog of American musical landmarks. They are stalked by ■ gaunt man who may or may not be Satan, determined to reclaim the corpse they absconded with before he could collect the soul he purchased (at discount rates) from its previous occupant.

While some of the odd characters we encounter along the way are funny, most of *Highway 61* is at best pleasantly weird, at worst opaque and self-indulgent. It's the kind of self-conscious cult film that is certain to gain some fans, but those who want more than some quirky cameos and a hip soundtrack are advised to look elsewhere. —MF

LASERDISCS

Little Caesar The Public Enemy

Double feature. *Caesar*: 1930. B&W. Edward G. Robinson, Douglas Fairbanks Jr.; dir. Mervyn LeRoy. *Enemy*: 1931. B&W. James Cagney, Jean Harlow, Edward Woods, Joan Blondell; dir. William A. Wellman. Digital mono. (NR) 162 min. plus supplements. CLV 4 sides. \$39.98. MGM/UA.

When *The Player's* Larry Levy suggested plucking movie ideas from news headlines, he may have taken his cue from Warner's 1930s gangster pics: Born of the Depression and Prohibition, with Al Capone bootlegging his way across Chicago, *Little Caesar* and *The Public Enemy*—now a laserdisc double feature—created a genre in all its rat-a-tat glory simply by mirroring the urban decay of that era.

As Rico Bandello, a.k.a. "Little Caesar," Edward G. Robinson stands above less-than-memorable supporting players as a quick-on-the-trigger criminal who rises fast and falls only when his myth surpasses him. Robinson's career-defining performance makes *Little Caesar* worth a viewing, despite its dated dialog and ultra-low budget.

The Public Enemy—shot in 26 days for \$150,000—is more well-rounded, from its opening look at young mischief-maker Tom Powers (a frighteningly believable James Cagney) to its final, chilling shot of Tom's demise. Thanks to William A. Wellman's surefooted direction, Tom's story flows more evenly than Rico's, and it still packs a wallop because most of the bloodshed is off camera. (The famous grapefruit-in-the-face scene, however, is still in your face.)

Presentation-wise, *The Public Enemy* is in much better shape than *Little Caesar*. While both exhibit a little wear, *Enemy* is not as heavy on contrast and shows more detail, and the audio doesn't sound muffled, as it does all too often on the Robinson title. The sleeve shows some careless mistakes: The photos accompanying production credits have been switched, and chapter descriptions for *Enemy* refer to Mike (Cagney's brother) as Matt (Cagney's pal). Also, *Little Caesar* is inexplicably stretched to three sides, though its final five minutes could easily have been tacked on to Side 2's 48

minutes. And Chapter 3, which promises *Little Caesar's* main title, is encoded at the wrong place on the disc, several minutes before the feature actually begins and in the middle of a Keystone Kops short. —April P. Bernard

Funny—The Movie

1992. Dir. Bran Ferren. Digital mono. (NR) 80 min. CLV 2 sides. \$39.95. Warner New Media.

I think it was Don Kirschner who once prophesied, "Comedy will be the next rock and roll." If he was right, the stuff we run across while channel surfing must be the cutout bin. Is it me, or are these people just not funny? For anyone who's ever sat poker-faced through yet another *Evening at the Generic Comedy Club* thinking he could do better, here's the proof.

Funny—The Movie is a collection of 84 people telling their favorite joke or funny story. Although there are a few celebrities, most of the comedians are the everyday folks we all hear our favorites from—bartenders, waitresses, a funny uncle, the office wag. Unburdened by a comic persona or the "job" of making you laugh, they come across more naturally (read: funnier) than most of the Leno wannabes you'll come across on any given night.

Both this laserdisc and an available CD-ROM version give you random access to all 84 jokes, so you don't have to

sit helplessly when a punch line rears its ugly head from a mile away. Through this interactive approach, *Funny—The Movie* is the opposite of *standup*—instead of the comic working the audience, it's the other way around. If phrases like, "What do you get when you cross a..." and "How many blanks does it take..." provoke you to a spontaneous smile, your soulmates are on this laserdisc. —Ron Goldberg

Executive Action

1973. Burt Lancaster, Will Geer; dir. David Miller. Digital mono. (PG) 91 min. plus trailer. CLV 2 sides. \$34.98. Warner.

In 1973, grazing the 10th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination, director David Miller (*Lonely Are the Brave*) and renowned screenwriter Dalton Trumbo co-opted the formidable research materials compiled by conspiracy doyen Mark Lane and dispatched *Executive Action*. American audiences were decidedly unprimed for a low-budget feature that illustrated with *Dick and Jane* simplicity the steps by which a group of power-brokers (in this case, a cabal of Texas oil men portrayed by heavyweights Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan and Will Geer) could engineer a "hit" on the president of the United States.

Executive Action fizzled during an era in which Warren Commission apologists outnumbered critics, Jim Garrison was

still licking his wounds, and the formation of the House Select Committee on Assassinations was six years away. The involvement of "blacklist" notables like Trumbo and Geer fueled the idea that the film's targeting of the right wing smacks of vendetta. Nearly 20 years passed before Oliver Stone could seduce the public with a glossy, star-packed reworking of the facts in *JFK*.

Executive Action is a veritable primer of basic conspiracy theory, and many of its key points were to spill out of Stone's *JFK* like shoplifted oranges—phrases like "triangulated fire" now evoke a perverse *deja vu*. And note that *JFK's* revelation—the notion that Kennedy sealed his fate the minute he threatened to pull troops out of Southeast Asia—is casually established during the first five minutes of *Executive Action*.

Is it any wonder conspiracy buffs are paranoid? —John Walker

The Outer Limits—Volume 2

1963-65. B&W. Martin Landau, Martin Sheen, Shirley Knight, Sally Kellerman. Digital mono. Eight episodes, 716 min. CLV 8 sides. \$99.98. MGM/UA.

The good news about this second *Outer Limits* boxed set is that it contains what is probably the single best show ("The Man Who Was Never Born") of the entire series. The bad news is that it also features two shows ("The Brain of Colonel Barham" and "The Probe") from the dying days of the series, and their presentation on laserdisc only accentuates their threadbare production values.

The beauty of *The Outer Limits* was that the acting, drama and direction took precedence over the science-fiction elements of what was essentially a science-fiction series. Thus, "The Man Who Was Never Born" is a fine time-travel story, but also a poignant romantic drama that works because of Martin Landau's and Shirley Knight's portrayal of two truly star-crossed lovers. The hideous alien insects in "The Zanti Misfits" and the energy creature in "It Crawled out of the Woodwork" provide some memorable chills, but the real worth of this collection is the eloquence of the series' execution: Dominic Frontiere's lovely flute reverie in "The Man Who Was Never Born," the stunning cinematography of Oscar-winner Conrad



King for a Day:
Little Caesar (Edward G. Robinson, center), a gangster at the height of his power, was modeled after Al Capone.



Hall throughout, the direction of Gerd Oswald and Leonard Horn.

The digital sound is clean though not especially sharp, but the video transfers are crisp enough to reveal emulsion scratches and flash-frames, along with the gorgeous and eerie soft-focus photography of "The Forms of Things Unknown."

—Bruce Eder

CLASSICS

A Woman Under the Influence

1974. Gena Rowlands, Peter Falk; dir. John Cassavetes. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 147 min. \$94.95. Touchstone.

The forthcoming video release of five of the most personal films of writer-director John Cassavetes is a boon to film buffs. Although his work has been universally acclaimed as among the best of American film, Cassavetes' semi-improvised explorations of human relationships were seldom seen in their brief theatrical releases (to avoid studio control, he self-distributed them) and virtually impossible to see thereafter.

Viewers coming to Cassavetes' work for the first time, however, should be forewarned that it can be as exasperating as it is exhilarating. *A Woman Under the Influence*, the first release in the series, is Cassavetes at his best and his worst.

Gena Rowlands has the title role of a housewife as unsure of her identity as her blue-collar husband (Peter Falk) is secure in his. Unable to articulate her frustrations, she is driven to increasingly erratic behavior. After six months in a mental institution, she returns to a home in which nothing has changed.

If the story sounds sketchy, it's be-

Disturbing Discs:

Ed Asner in *The Outer Limits*' "It Crawled out of the Woodwork."

cause plot was never one of Cassavetes' main concerns. His aim in *A Woman Under the Influence* is not to create dramatic tension, but to demonstrate how real people react to such a situation. Even with actors as resourceful as these, it doesn't always work: Some scenes drag on endlessly. When everything clicks, though, it's apparent Cassavetes made films like no other.

—MF

Grand Illusion

1938. B&W. Jean Gabin, Pierre Fresnay, Erich von Stroheim; dir. Jean Renoir. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 111 min. \$29.95. Home Vision.

Rules of the Game

1939. B&W. Dalio, Nora Gregor, Roland Toutain, Jean Renoir; dir. Renoir. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 110 min. \$29.95. Home Vision.

It's amazing how time can change perceptions. In 1938, Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion* was embraced by moviegoers still hoping for peace. By focusing on prisoners of war and their jailers, Renoir skewered the idea of war as an honorable undertaking using irony and humanity instead of scenes of slaughter. It's still impressive today, though for me it inspires more respect than love.

By the following year, when Renoir delivered a masterpiece, *Rules of the Game*, things had changed. War was now imminent, and the French were in no mood for Renoir's mordant portrayal of the moneyed class and its servants. Reviled by the public, banned by Vichy and the Nazis, and bombed by the Allies (the negative went up in an air raid), it wasn't until a restoration in the '50s that *Rules* was seen for what it was: an eruption of tragicomic invention unprecedented in film history.

These movies are not new to video, and neither are the transfers. *Illusion* is simply a reissue of the Connoisseur edition, complete with the sometimes anachronistic subtitles. *Rules* appears to be derived from the Criterion disc set; its image is sharper than on the earlier Embassy release, though there are occasional scratches. The Criterion supplement, a conversation with Renoir and Dalio about making the movie, is also included, preceded by an intro card with a "step forward" instruction. These are decent tape versions of two essential films, but I wish Home Vision had gone to a little more trouble.

—SLS

Mother Kusters Goes to Heaven

1976. Brigitte Mira, Ingrid Caven; co.-wr./dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 108 min. \$79.95. New Yorker.

While preparing dinner and waiting for her husband to return home from his job at a chemical factory, 80-year-old Mrs. Kusters hears news on the radio of a worker who has gone berserk, killing his personnel manager and himself for no apparent reason. A few minutes later, she is stunned to learn from a policeman that the worker was her husband.

People immediately flock around the dazed housewife, claiming to want to help her but actually out to use her. A reporter asks her leading questions and twists them into a scurrilous magazine article. Her decadent daughter returns home and turns her father's funeral into a publicity campaign for her nightclub act. And radical political groups use her campaign to clear her husband's name as a facade for their own agendas.

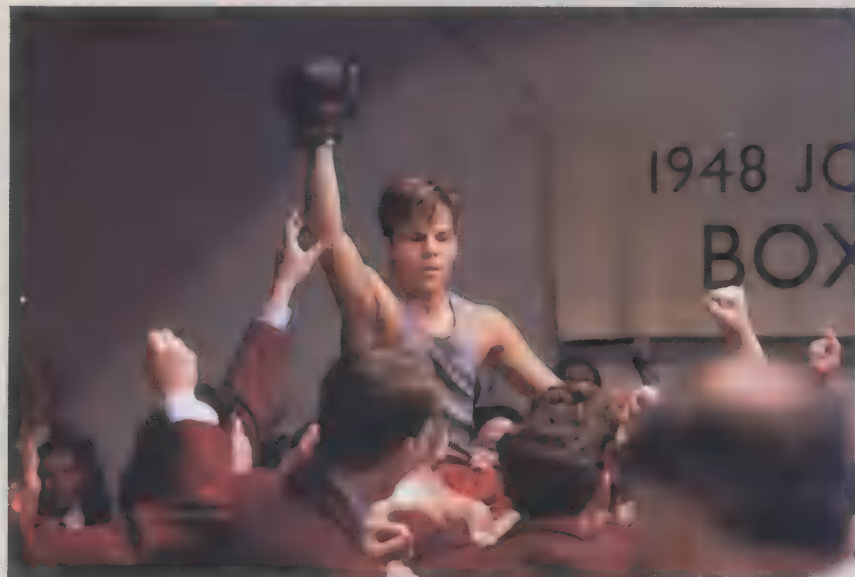
R.W. Fassbinder's antiestablishmentarianism was never more apparent than in *Mother Kusters Goes to Heaven*, in which he looks with bitter irony at all sides of the political spectrum. Time has taken some of the sting out of his once-bold attacks on the political left, though the touching performance of Brigitte Mira (*Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*) reminds us of the relative unimportance of political squabbles in people's everyday lives. The video features the original conclusion, not the absurdly happy ending that was shown in American theaters.

—MF



German Import: R.W. Fassbinder takes aim at politics in *Mother Kusters Goes to Heaven*.

DIRECTORY



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

Casablanca

1942. B&W. Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman; dir. Michael Curtiz. *Time has gone by*—50 years, to be precise. Anniversary edition includes documentary with Lauren Bacall, trailer and booklet. Gift set adds extended version of documentary, another trailer, hardcover book, stills and shooting script. Plus both versions sprinkled with coupons, certificates and rebates. Whew! Hi-fi mono, cc. (NR) 103 min. VHS, Beta \$24.98, gift set \$99.98. LD \$29.98 CLV (film, documentary), \$49.98 CAV (boxed set with film, documentary, booklet, two trailers). MGM/UA.

Chang

1927. B&W. Kru, Chantui, Nah; dirs. Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack. Directors' pre-Kong success, populated with Siamese hunters, bears, tigers, leopards and changs! Still exciting, now restored with ■ new soundtrack. Silent with musical accompaniment in mono. (NR) 67 min. VHS only, \$39.95. Milestone (212-865-7449).

The Complete Churchill

1991. B&W/color. 4 vols. BBC production: Martin Gilbert's biography of the illustrious statesman. Stereo. 200 min. VHS only, \$59.95 set. A&E.

Daughters of the Dust

1991. Tommy Hicks, Alva Rogers, Cora Lee Day; dir. Julie Dash. Arthouse winner: Early 20th-century African-American family readies for move north. Hi-fi stereo. (NR) 113 min. VHS only, \$79.95. Kino (800-562-3330).

Falling From Grace

1992. John Mellencamp, Mariel Hemingway, Claude Akins; dir. Mellencamp. Grammy-winner's directorial debut, with a script by Larry McMurtry (*The Last Picture Show*, *Lonesome Dove*) about a singer's

homecoming. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG-13) 101 min. VHS priced for rental. LD \$34.95. Columbia TriStar.

The 400 Blows

1959. B&W. Jean-Pierre Leaud, Albert Remy; dir. Francois Truffaut. The French director's masterpiece, ■ semiautobiographical portrait of Parisian youth Antoine Doinel. Restored and retranslated along with eight other Truffauts—including *Jules and Jim*, *Two English Girls* and *The Woman*

The Champ

Screen newcomer Stephen Dorff teams with director John G. Avildsen, Morgan Freeman and Sir John Gielgud in a drama of South Africa, *The Power of One*.

Next Door—with Criterion laserdiscs in months to come. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 93 min. VHS \$39.95. Home Vision.

High Noon

1952. B&W. Gary Cooper, Grace Kelly; dir. Fred Zinnemann. Fortieth-anniversary edition (tape and laserdisc) of the western classic is remastered, with featurette, trailer and lobby card reproductions. Deluxe collector's edition packs in complete documentary, hardcover book, more lobby cards and poster. Hi-fi mono, cc. (NR) 111 min. VHS \$19.98, collector's edition \$69.98. LD \$59.98. Republic.

The Power of One

1992. Stephen Dorff, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Morgan Freeman, John Gielgud; dir. John G. Avildsen. British orphan in South Africa takes up boxing—and other, more political fights outside the ring. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG-13) 127 min. VHS, Beta, Sp.-subtitled VHS \$94.99. LD (letterboxed) \$39.98. Warner.

The Prince of Tides

1991. Nick Nolte, Barbra Streisand, Kate Nelligan; dir. Streisand. Two laserdisc ver-

Compiled by April P. Bernard

Labels For Less

Julian Sands and Bernadette Peters in *Impromptu*



Nightmares are more affordable than ever. For this Halloween: MCA/Universal's Spanish *Dracula*, filmed simultaneously with Bela Lugosi's 1931 version, plus other new-to-video titles like *The Uninvited*, *Dracula's Daughter*, *The Invisible Man Returns* and *The Mummy's Hand*—all \$14.98; from MGM/UA, two new-to-video chillers, *Mad Love* (\$19.98) and *What's the Matter With Helen?* (\$14.95); Warner's *From Beyond the Grave*, \$19.98; the original *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors* at \$9.98 each from Republic; and *An American Werewolf in London*, *Waxwork*, *Watchers* and *The Honeymoon Killers*, \$14.98 each from Vestron and LIVE.

If you're not in the mood for serial killers, how about some killer series? Buena Vista will be pulling more *Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* out of its hat, while MGM/UA will uncover six more volumes of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, and will remaster six James Bond adventures with Roger Moore. Also, look for the *Reading Rainbow* collection from PBS.

Winners just under \$20: *City Slickers* from New Line; *Impromptu* and *Vincent & Theo* from Hemdale; *Where the Lilies Bloom* from MGM/UA; *The Rocketeer* and *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* from Disney; and *Backdraft* and the restored *Hell's Angels* from MCA/Universal. Just under \$15: *Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol* and *The Dead* from LIVE; *A Room With a View*, *Big, Little Big Man*, *Working Girl*, *Notorious*, *Rebecca*, *The African Queen*, *Desk Set* and *Intermezzo* from FoxVideo; and Columbia TriStar's *Bad Influence* and *Suspect*. —APB



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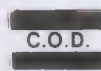
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DIRECTORY

sions of Streisand's opus: Columbia TriStar's no-frills disc, and Criterion's supplement-laden edition, with Streisand commentary, rehearsal and audition videos, alternate takes, stills and more. Digital surround, letterboxed, cc. (R) 132 min. Sides 3 & 4 CAV (Criterion). \$39.95 Columbia TriStar, \$99.95 Criterion.

King Kong

1933. B&W or colorized. Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong; dirs. Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack. Celebrating 60 years of the giant ape—a composite of six 18-inch puppets, an eight-foot hand and a 20-foot head—with scenes censored in 1938, remastered soundtrack and image from a restored negative. Collector's edition also features documentary, lucite display and postcard for free poster. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (NR) 103 min. VHS, Beta \$16.98, collector's edition \$59.98. Turner.

Macbeth

1948. B&W. Orson Welles, Roddy McDowall; dir. Welles. *Another* anniversary edition, this one the 45th, made special by restoring 21 minutes of footage as well as a soundtrack of the actors using Scottish accents. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 112 min. VHS \$19.98. LD \$49.98. Republic.

Overseas

1990. Nicole Garcia, Marianne Basler, Brigitte Rouan; dir. Rouan. In the midst of social upheaval, three sisters in 1946 French colonial Algeria lead privileged lives—albeit with a spot of man trouble. Mono, subtitled. (NR) 96 min. VHS only, \$89.95. Fox Lorber.

Paris Is Burning

1991. Pr./dir. Jennie Livingston. Not just another dry documentary: Controversial, wildly acclaimed look at Harlem transvestites "voguing" at drag balls stirred up even more talk when passed over for an Oscar nomination. Hi-fi mono, cc. (R) 76 min. VHS, Beta \$89.95. Academy.

Rambling Rose

1991. Laura Dern, Diane Ladd, Robert Duvall; dir. Martha Coolidge. Last year's sleeper made even more wonderful with audio commentary from the director, an alternate ending, outtakes and still-frame segments with storyboards, location photographs, script and more. Digital stereo, letterboxed. (R) 115 min. Sides 3 & 4 CAV. LD \$69.95. Pioneer Special Editions.

The Rescuers

1977. Anim. Voices of Bob Newhart, Eva Gabor, Geraldine Page. Bernard and Miss Bianca, two mice on a mission, must rescue an orphan from the clutches of Madame Medusa. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (G) 76 min. VHS, Beta \$24.99. LD \$39.99 CAV (with trailer), \$29.99 CLV. Walt Disney.

When It Was a Game

1992 comp. B&W/color. A fan's dream come true: home movie footage of major-league baseball, 1934-57, from both spectators and players. Hi-fi stereo. 57 min. VHS only, \$19.98. HBO.

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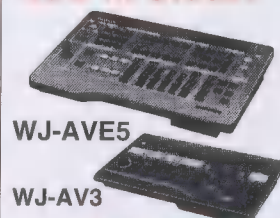
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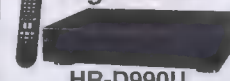
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continued from page 58

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Stokeys Serials (Box 426, Selden, NY 11784), whose catalog warns that it "offers features to fans and to collectors, not to perfectionists," has movie serials from 1917 to 1956, including some thought to have been lost. Movies are \$16, serials \$35. Send \$3 for the catalog. **Trailers on Tape** (c/o SF Rush Video, 1576 Fell Street, #1, San Francisco, CA 94117; 415-921-TAPE) carries 27 volumes of trailers compiled by subject — films of 1939, John Wayne, Oscar promotions, classic horror and sci-fi, etc. — on VHS and Beta. Tapes are a bit pricey at \$35, but the company offers a good selection.

Video Dimensions (530 West 23 Street, New York, NY 10011; 212-929-6135) isn't large, but it's been around for a while and offers a good selection covering all the usual bases (classic TV, mondo, westerns, foreign). All tapes are derived from its library of 16mm films, so high-quality transfers are assured. Tapes range from \$13 to \$20.

Video Yesteryear (Box C, Sandy Hook, CT 06482; 800-243-0987) is the undisputed leader in silent films on video. Nostalgia buffs will want the \$2.95 catalog for information and browsing value alone. Most of its silent tapes feature correct projection speed and original organ music. Most tapes (VHS, Beta and 8mm) are priced from \$15 to \$30, and serials are somewhat higher. ■

SKINNY

continued from page 57

riod is often required while they recontour themselves to allow for the subtle difference in tip penetration that varies from one tape thickness to another. Until this happens, more dropouts may be visible for up to 10 minutes.

Despite efforts to strengthen the thinner base film that makes the new generation of tapes possible, the tapes still have problems with stretching and "cupping" (a tendency of tape to curl up

continued on page 94

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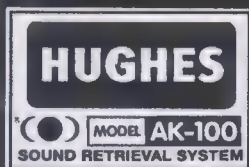


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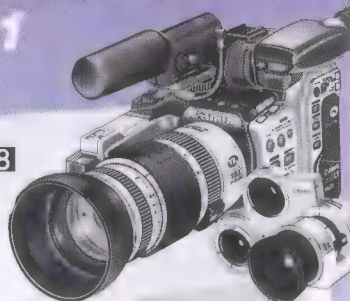


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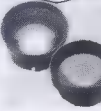
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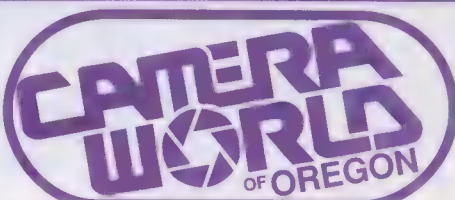


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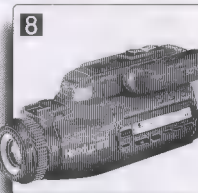
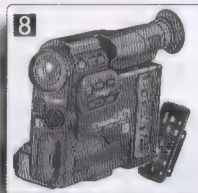
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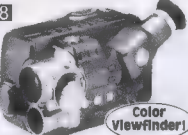
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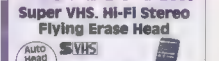


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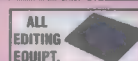
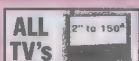
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JVC

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KH-H3 EIS 10-1 HI 8-TR101
KX95 10-1 HF MINI-TR71

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SONY
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HRVP 46 UVCR+
HRDX 10 UHI FI
HRVP 66 UHF VCR+
HRD 820 U4 HD JOG
HRD 990 UHF JOG EDIT
HRS 4700SUPER
HRS 6800SUPER JOG EDIT
HRS 10,000IN STOCK
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ALL MODELSCALL

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MITSUBISHI

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HS-U-67CALL
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PV4260CALL
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PV4266-S4270CALL
PV54280CALL
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PANASONIC
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SPP 65TTD 150
SPP 75ITD 200
SPP 85ITD 200
SPP 95ITD 250
SPP 115ITA 205
SPP 120ITA 305
SPP 160ITA 505
SPP 170ITA 850
SPP 320ITA DSP
SPPS 110ITA 4000
SPPD 15TAM 30
ITD 10TAM 50

Panasonic

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KXT 3720KXT 2355
KXT 3980KXT 2365
KXT 4000KXT 3170
KXT 9000KXT 1450
KXT 4300KXT 1470
KXT 2634KXT 1740
KXT 2740ALL MODELS
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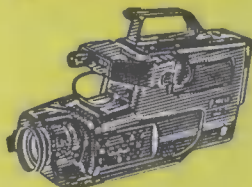
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Panasonic



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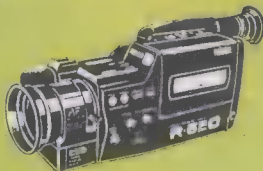
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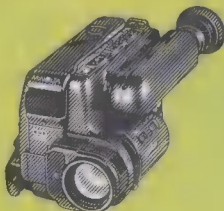
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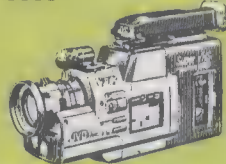
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JVC

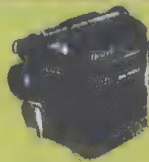


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Quasar



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PV-22 PV-42

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PV-4214 PV-S4266
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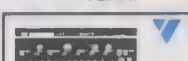


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GR-SX90

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- 3 MODE AF

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- 3 MODE AF

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- 10x1

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PV-S372 CALL

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VHSC

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GV-200, 300, 500 (Watchman)			CALL

8MM

Quasar

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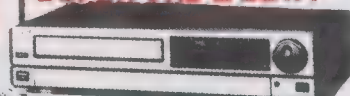


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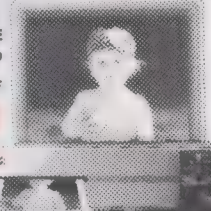


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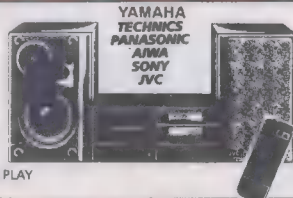
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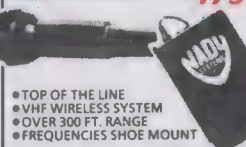
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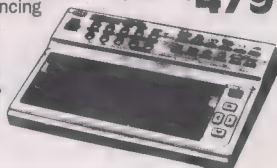
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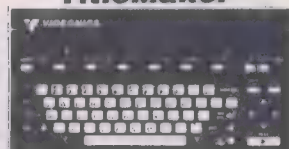
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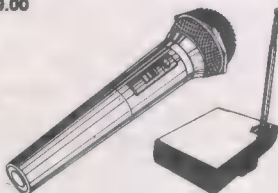
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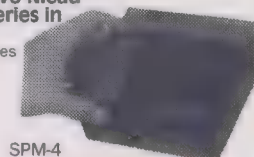


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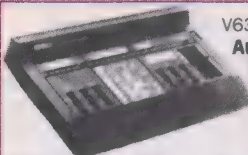
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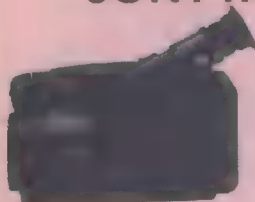
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continued from page 74

at the edges), both of which can reduce picture quality. The degree of tape stretch can be influenced by the vintage of the playback VCR and how it handles the tape, although environmental factors like temperature and humidity also come into play. Newer, full-load decks tend to handle tape more gently, but most decks still use the standard M-load thread/unthread cycle that returns the tape to the cassette every time the user pushes the stop button.

Tape wraps in the 8mm format have recently been altered, turning the tape path into a more challenging journey. With the small, 26.7mm four-head drum used in Sony's Handycams rapidly becoming an industry standard, the tighter wrap of the tape around the drum (which is just slightly larger in diameter than a quarter), coupled with the fact that the tape stays wrapped while winding and rewinding, subjects tape to more stress. VHS-C camcorders unload the tape from the drum during fast wind cycles, but the same may not be true of a table-model VCR if playback is accomplished with a PlayPak adapter.

Despite some problems, thinner tapes are the wave of the future, for both consumers and professionals. This summer, when NBC broadcast the Olympics from Barcelona, Spain, it used Panasonic's D-3, the latest in digital video formats. D-3 cassettes appear to be nothing more than kissing cousins of VHS, but nothing could be further from the truth. This state-of-the-art broadcast system can be edited and dubbed through up to 30 generations with no apparent signal loss. And the tape that makes it all possible? Half-inch metal-particle about 10 microns thick, or half as thick as standard VHS.

Now when can we have a consumer version? ■

COLOR BARRIER

continued from page 54

of direct-view designs, so they can employ more correct phosphors.

Also important is that most projection sets use three separate tubes, one for each color. This helps the sets avoid phosphor-coexistence problems (some phosphors just don't work well with others) endemic to direct-view sets. Most projection televisions produce more accurate color gamuts, with almost no errors in the green and yellow regions and relatively small ones on the blue side. Red, however, remains the weakest link, with true, intense crimson approached but not achieved.

Meanwhile, video's increasing importance in the personal computer world is

fueling the development of new color standards and technologies, with color-correcting computer monitors already available to consumers. These employ processing within the PC to respond to a sensor—usually, a little suction-cup affair—temporarily stuck onto the monitor screen. The sensor reads test-signal colors from the screen, and sends corrective data to the computer to adjust color to meet a single standard. However, PC color correction works digitally on still-frame images; applying similar technology to television would require a processing bit-rate of perhaps 15 gigahertz—a thousand or so times higher than current consumer-grade technology can produce.

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

The most significant change on the horizon is the impending implementation of a U.S. HDTV standard. HDTV presents a unique opportunity to upgrade video color. When HDTV finally appears, it will include highly evolved new color standards for both the production (TV studio) and reception (home TV) ends of the chain, as well as storage systems such as future-tech videotapes and discs.

The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) has nearly completed writing new standards that address both HDTV and our existing NTSC universe. The specifications will standardize video color so that manufacturers can begin to work in concert refining advanced color systems. This is critical because HDTV will incorporate some sort of color-correction circuitry to expand the video color gamut and reduce set-to-set variations. Color-correction routines could be quite powerful, performing substantial color transformation. So it's imperative that each TV set maker work from a single chromatic baseline to ensure that consumers receive similar results.

Second, the new standards, unlike the current system, will include different rules for each level of video production: broadcast, storage, reception and reproduction. The rules will be complementary, working together to help correct most of the inevitable color errors introduced at different stages of the video production and reproduction chain.

For example, today's professional cameras are not perfectly matched to the TV sets in common use, so the color you see is different from that recorded. New standards would take this into account, and incorporate corrections. Any video color-correcting system adopted in the near future is likely to be an analog or analog/digital hybrid design less pow-

continued on page 100

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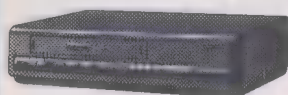
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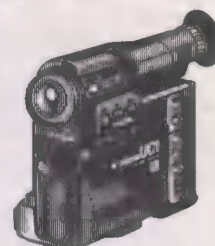
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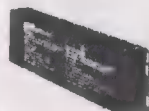
VIDEO ACCESSORIES



Camcorder LIGHTS



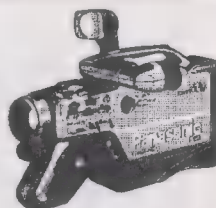
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Panasonic Camcorders



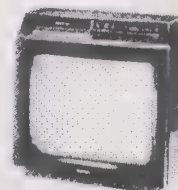
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PV700 PV750
PV704 PV760
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PV720

VHS-C
Palmcorders
PV19
PV21
PV41

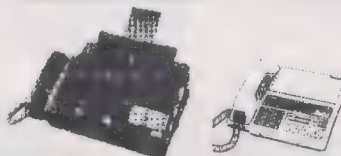


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Yes ☐ No ☐

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31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105
106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135
136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

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31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
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76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105
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121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135
136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
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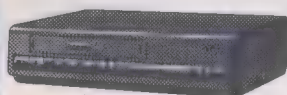
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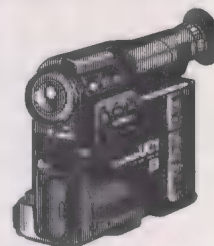
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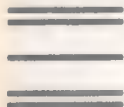
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Camcorders

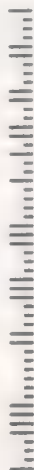
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

PLACE
STAMP
HERE



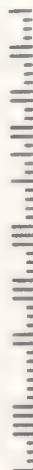
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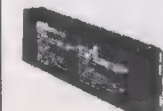
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Camcorder LIGHTS



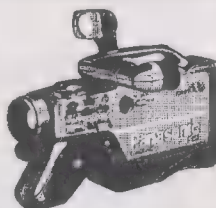
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Camcorder & VCR BATTERIES For Most Brands!!

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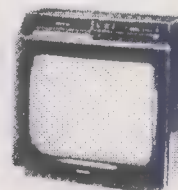
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PV21
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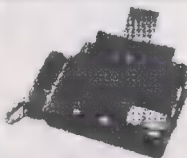


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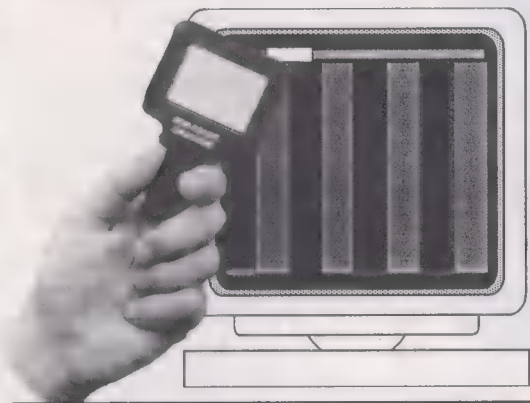
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continued from page 94

erful than the digital systems used in high-end computer imaging. Just the same, it is likely to significantly improve video color, bringing the universal visual medium of television much closer to cinema.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Right now, there's not a great deal you can do to improve the color accuracy of your TV set. When shopping for a color TV set, neither manufacturers' specifications nor in-store demos are particularly helpful. Color accuracy is impossible to judge subjectively in an uncontrolled environment. And set-to-set in-store comparisons are largely meaningless, because manufacturers' specs do not include directly comparable color-performance data, and TV sets are rarely set up properly in stores (which are almost always far too bright).

Nevertheless, there are steps you can take that will do more than simply make you feel better. Number one is to defeat the automatic color circuit on your own TV set, or any you're considering. Auto color circuits are supposedly calibrated to deliver the most natural flesh tones and consistent color levels, even while switching from program to program or source to source. They usually don't, and the corrections they do perform are generally at the expense of the set's other colors.

Instead, learn to set up your monitor for optimum color using the simple, user-accessible controls provided: brightness (black level), contrast or picture (white level), color (saturation), and tint or hue (chroma phase). The procedure is simple and requires neither a technician nor test gear to perform.

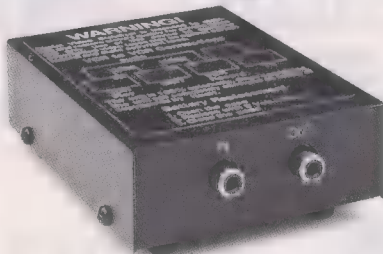
It can be learned from *A Video Standard*, a \$70 laserdisc from Reference Recordings (415-355-1892). The disc is packed with useful and informative data, images and soundtracks, among which are numerous video test patterns—both black-and-white and color—and audio test signals. It includes a complete, step-by-step tutorial for monitor setup, and even supplies a special blue viewing filter enabling correct color setup. The disc is virtually a study course in overall TV performance, thanks to hundreds of still frames and an accompanying 16-page booklet. Using it, you should calibrate your monitor every month or so, like the pros do.

Next, consider room lighting an integral part of any serious viewing session. There's no consensus among experts here, but most would agree that dim, incandescent-white room lighting is closer to ideal than either bright light or full darkness. Room lighting is important because ambient light dramatically

Think of them as washing machines for video tapes.

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influences our perception of color. So matching the viewing environment to the production environment (video production control rooms are dimly lit) helps to better match the perceptions of viewers to those of a film's producers.

Finally, demand that TV manufacturers begin listing meaningful color performance data in their product specifications. This could at least be partially accomplished by including chromaticity charts from the Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage (CIE, or International Commission on Illumination) to compare monitors' color capabilities. This "shark-fin" graph, first adopted way back in 1931, could graphically depict any TV set's color gamut and superimpose it on the theoretically visible one in a clear, easily grasped diagram.

By overlaying one CIE chart on another, we'd be able to compare directly the color compromises that each video monitor design team must make. CIE charts would not, however, objectivize a monitor's overall accuracy relative to the production "master," because NTSC video is a non-linear system (what comes out is not precisely what went in). Developing new performance specs that could do so will require new standards,

such as those SMPTE is preparing.

But, remembering how color TV got the way it is today, perhaps the best advice of all is simply to be very fussy about color when buying anything video: TV sets, cable services, VCRs, laserdisc players, even blank or prerecorded tapes. If consumers make accurate video color a significant market issue, manufacturers, broadcasters and cablecasters will have to respond. After all, consumer video is among the most market-driven technology in existence. A video rose may not be a rose, but a dollar definitely is a dollar. ■

TECH TIPS

Cable comments

If you have a TV set with audio/video jacks you're not using, you're not getting the best picture your system can provide. To get the best picture from your VCR, connect both its antenna output and its audio/video outputs to your TV set. Connecting the antenna output will

let you watch TV without turning on the VCR. When you want to watch a tape, switch to the TV set's video input. This will minimize radio-frequency interference that comes in over the antenna cable.

Level-headed tripod

If your tripod does not have a level, go to your hardware store and buy a "bull's-eye" circular bubble level. Attach it to your tripod or the top of your camcorder (if the top is flat), so that when you set up your tripod you will be able to level it quickly.

Joe Faria
San Geronimo, California

Meter magic

An inexpensive sound level meter like Radio Shack's \$32 Realistic 33-2050 lets you adjust surround-sound levels precisely. Just set the meter's microphone where you plan to sit, activate your surround-sound decoder's test tone, and adjust the channel levels so they match. You can also use the meter with test CDs and laserdiscs to fine-tune the placement of your speakers.



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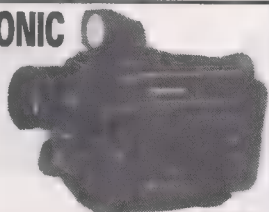


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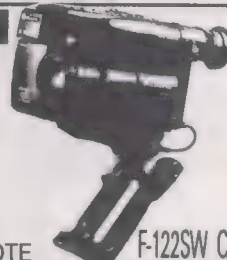


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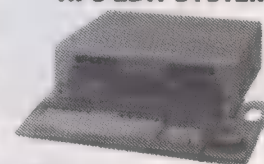
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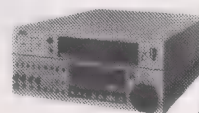
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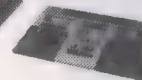
**SONY EVO-9700
HI-8 EDIT SYSTEM**



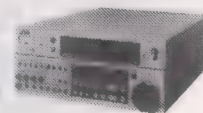
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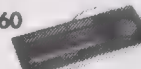


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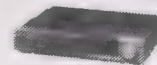
**Panasonic
EDIT SYSTEM**



AG-1960



AGA96



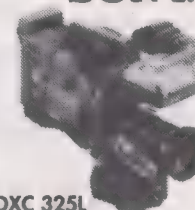
AG-1960

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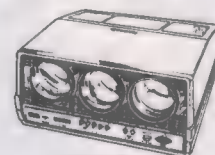


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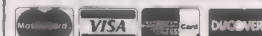
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November 1992	9/3/92	9/10/92
December 1992	10/1/92	10/8/92
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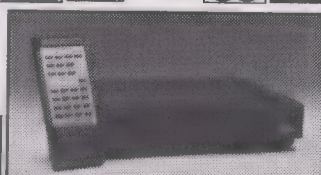
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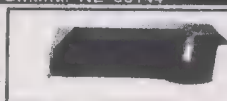
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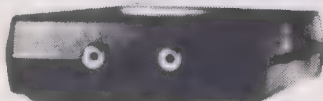
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6. Never send cash. Pay by check or money order or with a credit card so you will have a record of your transaction. If you pay by credit card, you may have a greater measure of recourse in the event the advertiser does not perform. (Check the complaint procedures of your credit card companies.)
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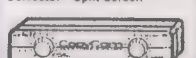
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OFF THE AIR

Driven crazy by video? You're not alone.

BY STAN PINKWAS

Ouch!

We asked you back in the May issue to tell us what drives you crazy about the world of video, and you did. With more passion than a Perot petition drive, you've sent us a message video's movers and shakers are advised to ignore only at their peril. The gripes for our second annual "Drives Me Crazy" poll poured across our transom in an unrelenting tide — 7,187 pointed complaints from more than 600 vexed videophiles.

Far and away, our readers' number one bugaboo is cable television. Cable problems account for three of the 10 most maddening situations readers identified among the 50 listed in the poll. More than two-thirds of all respondents condemned cable prices, cable picture quality and cable service. In our first poll, in 1991, cable TV gripes held only two of the top 10 positions. No wonder the Congress is up in arms.

Other than cable, bugged buffs re-buffed would-be censors, ads on movie

tapes, "call for price" equipment ads, bad TV reception, Macrovision, R-rated versions of X-rated films and EP-speed movie tapes. The underlying message is simple: Video enthusiasts want quality components that perform as promised, better reception, responsive service and the freedom to make their own decisions about controversial programs.

Numerous readers also put the kibosh on pay-per-view movies and sporting events, damaged rental tapes, wiring problems, hard-to-use controls, home shopping networks, useless bells and whistles, illegible subtitles, colorization, pan-and-scan movie transfers and letterboxing ("I didn't get a 10-foot screen to have half of it stay black," grumbled one ruffled viewer).

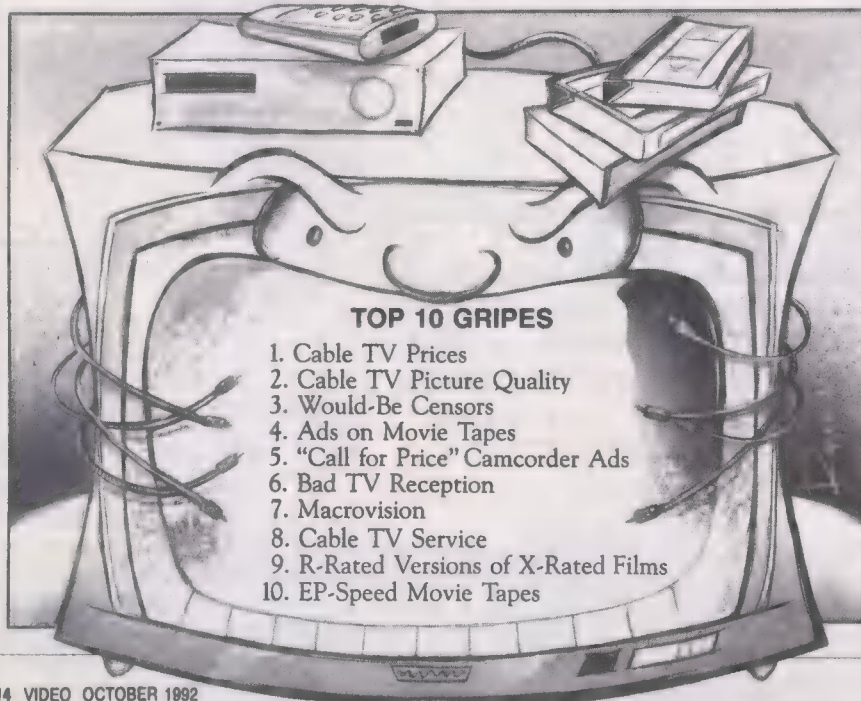
And readers revealed problems not included in our poll. A stereophile from Tucson, Arizona, reported "reversed stereo channels" coming from his cable system. "Dynamite tossed to the right; you hear it go left. Robocop bashed right to left; you hear him bashed left to right," he charged. "Calling and writing

doesn't help. These idiots at the cable company cannot understand the most basic explanations of reversed channels."

While most readers rankled at "censorship of any kind," as one wrote, a handful took the opposite tack. "Why can't we rent or buy R-rated movies cleaned up for family viewing?" asked a frustrated movie lover. "There must be a market for people like me. I am wearing out my *Indiana Jones* discs."

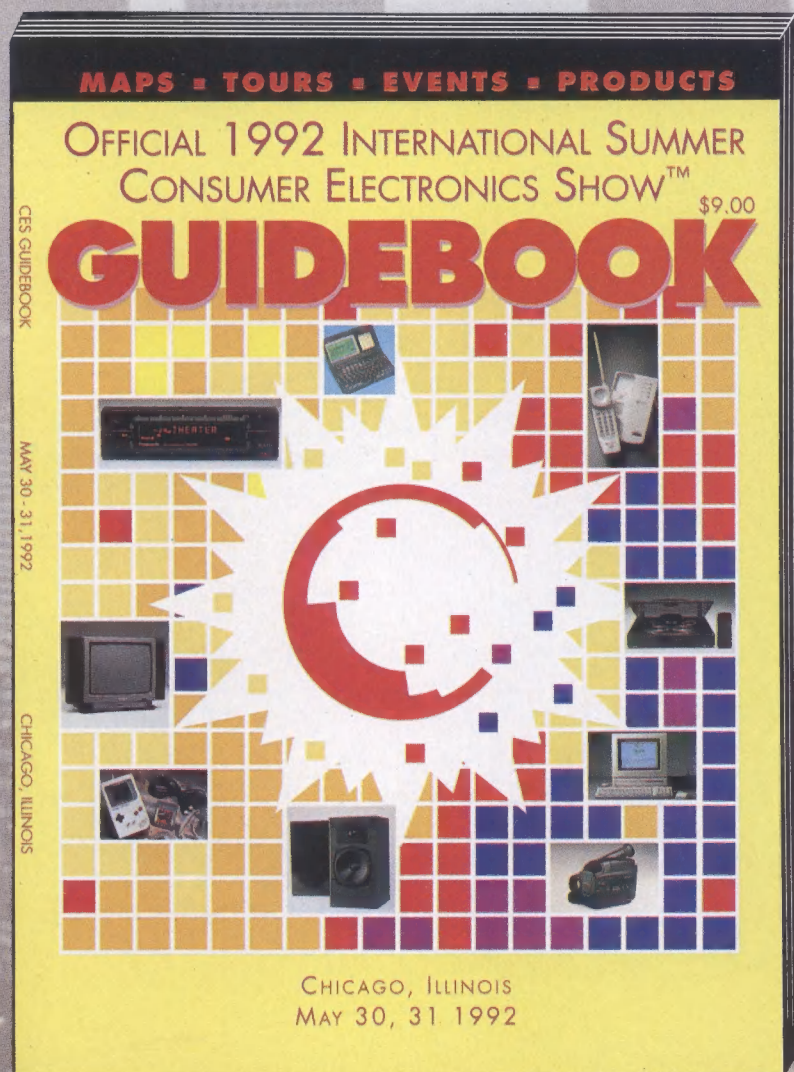
What else is wrong with video? Plenty, it would appear from the following complaints, which appeared frequently, in various forms, in the write-in part of our poll. According to you, our readers, you're also nettled, irked, galled and annoyed by:

- "Universal remotes that aren't."
- "Mindless channel hopping."
- "People who can't program a VCR."
- "Onscreen programming."
- "Small buttons close together."
- "VCRs with no battery backup."
- "Taking many controls off the front of the VCR."
- "Salespeople who don't know the equipment."
- "Brand-name snobs."
- "Not knowing when you're getting a cut version of a movie."
- "Bad cable audio."
- "PG versions of R-rated movies."
- "Different volume levels on channels."
- "Cable stations that make you take advertising channels in their packages. Who are they kidding?"
- "Network or program logos in the corner of the picture for waaayy toooo long."
- "Cable boxes that negate VCR remotes."
- "Satellite dishes on front lawns — the ultimate in tacky."
- "Time-compressed movies on cable."
- "Taking the LP speed away."
- "Made-for-TV movies rented as theatrical releases."
- "Lack of laserdisc rental sources."



Research assistance by April P. Bernard

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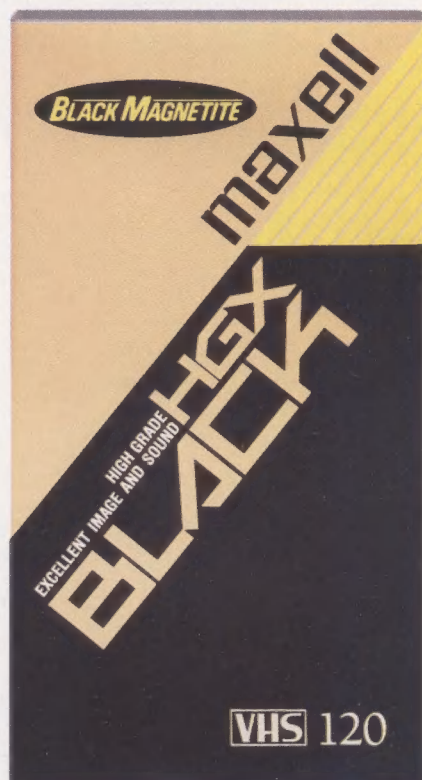
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